

GENDER RESPONSIVE APPROACHES TO FOREIGN POLICY AND THE 2030 AGENDA: FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICIES

Summary

Recently, gender-responsive approaches to foreign policy have gained much momentum – particularly since Sweden adopted a feminist foreign policy (FFP) in 2014. As of August 2023, thirteen countries have committed to a similar approach by declaring an FFP.¹ This growing momentum is equally reflected at the subnational level with governments such as Scotland’s committing to advance principles of FFP in their international relations.² According to proponents, FFP reflects the interaction of states at the international level through the integration of feminist principles into foreign policy design and implementation. Feminist civil society organizations and researchers have engaged in the evolution of FFP by working together with Member States to interrogate and contextualize this new foreign policy approach so that it achieves transformative change in global politics.

Proponents argue that FFP seeks to be transformative, promote a post-colonial and anti-racist vision of foreign policy and eliminate structural discrimination in an intersectional manner. The “Rights, Resources, Representation” criteria launched by Sweden in 2014 signaled a strong commitment to human rights, the meaningful representation of all women and girls and the allocation of sufficient financial and other resources to advance gender equality globally. These “3R” criteria have become a popular framing of FFP but are not prescriptive of how Member States should design and implement their FFP frameworks, which are typically shaped by the internal identities and priorities of each Member State.

As interest in FFP grows globally, advocates, commentators and critics call for deeper reflection and bolder action to translate strong commitments to gender equality in foreign policy into robust policy options that will enable FFP to claim its transformative potential.

This analytical desk review of existing FFP literature discusses the alignment of FFP with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which is operationalized within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With the wide range of policy areas and relevance to both the Global North and the Global South, gender-responsive policies to implement the SDGs at the global, regional, national and local level can infuse the FFP agenda with more diverse perspectives, focus and specificity, and broaden its scope from areas of diplomatic representation and multilateral engagement to areas that current FFP frameworks address inconsistently such as trade, humanitarian action, sustainable financing, migration, climate change and others. The SDGs can also be useful in the development of monitoring and accountability mechanisms to evaluate emerging and existing FFP frameworks in a more systematic way. At the same time, by strengthening the integration of gender equality objectives across the 2030 Agenda, effective implementation of FFP can accelerate progress toward the achievement of the SDGs.

¹ This list is based on analysis of publicly available information, directly attributed to government officials.

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/background-note-scotlands-feminist-approach-foreign-policy/>

Introduction

In 2014, Sweden announced the world’s first feminist foreign policy (FFP). The nation committed to the advancement of gender equality and the rights of women and girls through foreign policy and multilateral engagement. Almost a decade later, international momentum around FFP continues to grow. As of August 2023, 13 countries from Europe, the Americas, and Africa have committed to apply a feminist lens to their foreign policy – with eight joining in just the past two years. Feminist civil society groups, researchers and leaders are already working together to interrogate and contextualize FFP.

Even before 2014, a growing number of countries had begun adopting gender-responsive approaches to their foreign policies, drawing from foundational multilateral frameworks, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA); the Security Council Resolutions on Women Peace and Security (WPS); and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since the announcement of the first FFP in 2014, however, the countries listed in the graph below have pushed for even greater inclusion of feminist principles in foreign policy practices, especially in development.



Note: In late 2022, Sweden announced that it no longer identifies its foreign policy as feminist but reaffirmed its commitment to continue promoting gender equality through its foreign policy. Countries marked with an asterisk have published a manual or handbook outlining their FFP principles and priorities. Links to published handbooks can be found in Annex I.

Common Criteria and Associated Principles

Proponents note that FFP seeks to provide a framework that promotes gender equality as a central foreign policy priority.³ At the rhetorical level, FFP seeks to apply feminism as a powerful and disruptive analytical tool that names entrenched power structures and takes a transformative, intersectional approach to overcoming them.⁴ Although definitions of FFP should remain flexible and reflect different perspectives, an analysis of FFP focus areas in existing government handbooks indicates some shared core themes, principles and objectives. Sweden succinctly framed the approach as the **3Rs criteria**, for **“Rights, Representation, Resources”** and later added a fourth criterion: **Research**. Most countries engaged in FFP discourse have adopted similar framing.

While these labels vary depending on country context, they signal a commitment to equality and non-discrimination and to upholding the human rights of all women and girls by promoting their substantive representation in decision-

making and leadership positions, including in foreign policy, and ensuring that adequate resources are committed to advancing gender equality, prioritizing funding for autonomous feminist movements and women’s rights organizations at the local, regional and global level, and by ensuring the adequate funding of research and collaborative policy formulation across diverse geographical areas around the world.^{5,6}



*These are examples of common key principles to which existing FFPs aspire, drawn from available literature on FFP.

3 Thompson, L. 2023. Sound the alarm-Sweden drops “feminist” and returns to mere “foreign policy.” Ms. Magazine. 2023, January 19. <https://msmagazine.com/2023/01/19/sweden-feminist-foreign-policy/>

4 Federal Foreign Office, Government of Germany. 2023. Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy: Federal Foreign Office Guidelines. <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2585076/4d2d295dad8fb1c41c6271d2c1a41d75/ffp-leitlinien-data.pdf>

5 Bergman-Rosamond, A., Duncanson, C. & Gentry, C. 2022. Opinion paper: Scotland the Brave? An Authentic, Ambitious and Accountable Feminist Foreign Policy. Scottish Council on Global Affairs. 2022, July 25. <https://scga.scot/2022/07/25/opinion-paper-feminist-foreign-policy/>

6 Aggestam, K., & Bergman-Rosamond, A. 2016. Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy in the Making: Ethics, Politics, and Gender. Cambridge University Press. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ethics-and-international-affairs/article/swedish-feminist-foreign-policy-in-the-making-ethics-politics-and-gender/FEE6103E38181D831DA1BEBE8861C289>

Scholarship on feminist foreign policy has called for FFP to be **transformative** by challenging entrenched patriarchal power dynamics and systems. In this context, FFP seeks to eliminate discrimination at the structural level through the application of an **intersectional** lens in foreign policy that recognizes people’s lived experiences are shaped by overlapping systems of inequality based on gender, class, race, and ethnicity, among others. Further, FFP should adopt an **inclusive and collaborative approach** to ensuring that these diverse perspectives are reflected in the development and implementation of FFP. Some articulations of FFP are explicit about aspirations to challenge existing legacies of colonialism and global power hierarchies that uphold the international system.⁷ FFP also strives to be **cross-cutting**, with some frameworks aiming to extend to all levers of foreign policy, including trade, defense, diplomacy, development, etc. and demonstrate **coherence** among international, domestic and local policies when applied across multiple government ministries, departments and agencies.

Gaps between aspiration and implementation, however, can potentially undermine FFP. These include a **lack of diverse geographical perspectives** in FFP discourse; **weak coherence** across all areas of foreign policy – particularly when national interests conflict with FFP principles – and between domestic and international levels; and a lack of clarity **translating envisioned principles into actionable policies** and commitments for transformational change at the structural level. FFP is also vulnerable to global push-back against gender equality and the rights of all women and girls and to political and ideological shifts in newly elected governments, particularly when FFP has a strong association with a specific political party or leader.⁸ Certainly, **these challenges point to the need for a new framework of reference to address gaps and strengthen the institutionalization of gender-responsive approaches to foreign policy through national legislation and commitments.**

Feminist Foreign Policy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), their targets and means of implementation were intended to stimulate action in five areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet.⁹ This section explores how the implementation of the SDGs, delivered through FFP aspirations, can accelerate progress and close gaps across each area.

PEOPLE



This critical area includes goals and targets to end hunger and poverty in all their forms and dimensions and to

ensure that all human beings can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality.¹⁰

Yet, across regions, poverty and hunger disproportionately affect women and girls, particularly those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and who are also excluded from social protection and public services.¹¹ The target of ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services will not be met by 2030.¹² Achieving universal, high-quality education for all girls remains out of reach – while rising rates of female education are not translating to increasing female representation in the job market across sectors in both developed and developing countries.¹³

7 Haastrup, T. 2023. Making feminist foreign policy work for Africa. APRI. 2023, July 26. <https://afripoli.org/making-feminist-foreign-policy-work-for-africa>

8 Monroy, M.C. & Rojas, A. 2023. Política exterior feminista en Colombia. Desafíos 35(2) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371592635_Politica_exterior_feminista_en_Colombia

9 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). Transforming our World: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development. United Nations. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

10 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). Transforming our World: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development. United Nations. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

11 Commission on the Status of Women. 2022. Report of the Secretary-General: Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes. United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2022, January 4. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3956348?ln=en>

12 United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2023. Report of the Secretary-General (Special Edition). Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet. 2023, April 27. https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/SDG%20Progress%20Report%20Special%20Edition_o.pdf

13 Commission on the Status of Women. 2022. Report of the Secretary-General: Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change, Environmental and Disaster Risk Reduction Policies and Programmes. United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2022, January 4. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3956348?ln=en>

Gender equality has receded further from reach, with none of the SDG 5 indicators in sight of their targets by 2030. Indeed, at the current rate of progress it will take up to 286 years to close the gaps in legal protection and remove discriminatory laws; 140 years for women to be represented equally in positions of power and leadership in the workplace, and 47 years to achieve equal representation in national parliaments.¹⁴ Significant gaps persist in laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights or to address and prevent violence against women.^{15,16} The COVID-19 pandemic increased women's unpaid care responsibilities – leading to more than two million women leaving the workforce. Approximately 12 million women experienced disruptions in birth control, resulting in 1.4 million unwanted pregnancies, and around 10 million more girls will be at risk of child marriage by 2030 due to the impact of the pandemic.¹⁷

Clearly, the SDG principle 'leave no one behind' has not translated consistently into effective and inclusive policies at global, regional and national levels. For example, efforts to improve women's political representation have often assumed that the presence of more women will equally benefit all women and have therefore tended to focus on descriptive rather than substantive representation.¹⁸ Policies to ensure access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and to prevent and respond to gender-based violence have often been framed as the issues of individual women and girls, without addressing the unequal power relations and social norms that create structural barriers to gender equality.¹⁹ Overall, the SDGs have not yet translated into a robust framework to protect and fulfill the human rights of those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.²⁰

Implementation of the SDGs through FFP can bridge some of these gaps. Countries adopting gender-responsive approaches to their foreign policy, including those with FFP frameworks, can develop integrated approaches to holistically address multiple forms of deprivation and discrimination. Dismantling discriminatory laws and social norms and implementing special measures and quotas for equal representation should be prioritized to accelerate progress. More broadly, such approaches can include efforts to address the global erosion of human rights, reaffirming their universality and indivisibility. By consistently applying an intersectional analysis of power relations, FFP has the potential to identify the impact of structural inequalities on different communities. A commitment to inclusion and collaboration can also ensure that these communities are engaged in the design and regular evaluation of policies seeking to transform power relations and inequitable systems.

PLANET



Goals and targets in this area seek to systematically protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change.²¹

Unsustainable patterns of production and consumption in industrialized countries disproportionately affect the livelihoods and security of women and girls.²² Climate change

14 United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2023. Report of the Secretary-General (Special Edition). Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet. 2023, April 27. https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/SDG%20Progress%20Report%20Special%20Edition_o.pdf

15 United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2023. Report of the Secretary-General (Special Edition). Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet. 2023, April 27. https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/SDG%20Progress%20Report%20Special%20Edition_o.pdf

16 UN Women. 2023. Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2023. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2023-en.pdf>

17 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2023. Global Sustainable Development Report (Advance, Unedited Version). 2023, June 14. <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Advance%20unedited%20GSDR%2014June2023.pdf>

18 Esquivel, Valeria. 2016. "Power and the Sustainable Development Goals: A Feminist Analysis." *Gender & Development* 24 (1): 9–23. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13552074.2016.1147872>

19 Stuart, Elizabeth and Jessica Woodroffe. 2016. "Leaving No-One Behind: Can the Sustainable Development Goals Succeed Where the Millennium Development Goals Lacked?" *Gender & Development* 24 (1): 69–81. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13552074.2016.1142206>

20 Pogge, Thomas W. and Mitu Sengupta. 2015. "The Sustainable Development Goals: A Plan for Building a Better World?" *Journal of Global Ethics* 11 (1): 56–64. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17449626.2015.1010656>

21 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). Transforming our World: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development. United Nations. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

22 Commission on the Status of Women. 2019. Report of the Secretary-General: Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcomes of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly. United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2019, December 13. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3850087?ln=en>

and environmental degradation can complicate access to public services and infrastructure for women and girls; restrict access to, use of and control over land and other natural resources, particularly for rural and indigenous women; and exacerbate existing gender gaps in access to and outcomes of health care, including access to sexual and reproductive health services.²³ Additionally, climate change, desertification and drought are drivers of conflict that can particularly affect women and girls.²⁴

However, **attention to the gender-related drivers and impacts of environmental and climate crises – even in FFP frameworks – is limited**, while climate and environment policies often do not align with broader efforts to advance gender equality.²⁵ Little progress has been made globally to give women full and equal access to land and natural resources.²⁶ Efforts to strengthen women’s participation in environmental sustainability and gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience have received the least attention globally.²⁷

Most frameworks do not include an intersectional analysis of pre-existing inequalities to systematically address gender gaps in climate change response plans nor do they describe plans to holistically address a just energy transition to sustainable and green economies that prioritizes social well-being. When co-created with those most affected by climate change and disasters, such plans can encompass policies, programmes and financial commitments to climate stabilization, biodiversity conservation and decent work and social protection for all, including significant investments in care.²⁸

At the structural level, countries with FFPs can interrogate and adjust policies – including their own – that are detrimental to the climate and the environment. Support

for a just transition can also entail contributing to efforts to move beyond GDP as the main indicator of economic progress and adopting a gender-transformative approach to tackling the impact of corporate activities – particularly in extractive industries – on those facing multiple forms of intersecting discrimination.²⁹

PROSPERITY



Goals and targets in this area are intended to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature. In this framing, economic development that recognizes the critical importance of sustainability and reducing inequalities is a requisite condition of prosperity for all.³⁰

However, by prioritizing growth through existing financial, tax and trade models, without interrogating their linkages with other systemic issues – including militarism, racism and unequal power relations between men and women and between countries – the SDGs have not sufficiently identified or addressed structural obstacles embedded in economic and social structures.³¹ Further, the assumption that economic development is directly linked to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls has not translated into transformative policies – designed on the basis of an intersectional structural analysis – to close gaps in labour force participation, wages, representation in management positions and digital literacy and accessibility, or in addressing occupational segregation,

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Winqvist, M. (ed.) 2020. *Feminist Policies for Climate Justice: Highlighting Key Linkages Between Gender and Climate*. Stockholm: Concord Sverige <https://concord.se/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/fem-rapport-2020-final.pdf>

²⁵ Commission on the Status of Women. 2019. Report of the Secretary-General: Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcomes of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly. United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2019, December 13. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3850087?ln=en>

²⁶ Winqvist, M. (ed.) 2020. *Feminist Policies for Climate Justice: Highlighting Key Linkages Between Gender and Climate*. Stockholm: Concord Sverige <https://concord.se/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/fem-rapport-2020-final.pdf>

²⁷ Commission on the Status of Women. 2022. Report of the Secretary-General: Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change, Environmental and Disaster Risk Reduction Policies and Programmes. United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2022, January 4. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3956348?ln=en>

²⁸ Commission on the Status of Women. 2019. Report of the Secretary-General: Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcomes of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly. United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2019, December 13. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3850087?ln=en>

²⁹ Winqvist, M. 2023. *The Game Changer: How a Feminist Foreign Policy could Transform Societies*. Concord Sweden. <https://concord.se/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/the-game-changer-slutversion.pdf>

³⁰ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. United Nations. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

³¹ Women’s Major Group (WMG). 2017. “High Level Political Forum - Position Paper (2017).” Women’s Major Group. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/3467HLPF_WMG_Paper_2017.pdf

precarity and informality, underinvestment in public and social services and the increasing share of unpaid care work for women and girls. Further, existing policy options often obstruct economic growth and infringe on the rights of millions of women. For example, economies in ageing, low-fertility societies would be better sustained through greater parity in the labour force than from setting targets for women to have more children.³²

Existing FFP frameworks have also often cast women's economic empowerment solely as a matter of growth without ensuring their rights or changing the structures that uphold gender gaps and inequality.³³ Additionally, countries pursuing FFP have not consistently applied a human-rights based, intersectional lens to feminist calls to end austerity, address the global debt crisis and facilitate a just transition to sustainable and green economies as echoed in the United Nations Secretary-General's [series of Pact for the Future briefs](#).

Therefore, **stronger commitments and accountability in line with their aspirational objectives can strengthen FFP frameworks by shifting the focus from integrating some women into existing economic and financial systems to protecting and promoting a rights-based approach to economic justice that is informed by the perspectives of those structurally excluded from current economic models and activity.** Additionally, to fully address the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development, FFP frameworks can support a just transition to sustainable economies that prioritize social well-being for all, thereby ensuring that policy frameworks are adequately funded and regularly evaluated in collaboration with the constituencies they affect.



PEACE – Goal 16

The fostering of peaceful, just and inclusive societies free from fear and violence underpins all other Goals since there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. Yet, according to the Secretary-General's 2023 report on progress toward the SDGs, one quarter of humanity lives in conflict-affected areas.³⁴ **Not a single conflict-affected country is on track to achieve the SDGs on health, hunger or gender equality.**³⁵ The 2023 UN Women Gender Snapshot on progress toward the SDGs reports that the number of women and girls living in conflict-affected contexts doubled to 614 million between 2017 and 2022.³⁶ Women's participation in peace processes remains limited, and their representation in security and police forces or judicial positions is well below parity.^{37,38} Women peacebuilders and human rights defenders – particularly those protecting land, environmental, indigenous and LGBTIQ rights – face increased risks of reprisals, threats and attacks.³⁹

Existing FFP frameworks have tended to prioritize the Women Peace and Security agenda's participation pillar, seeking to integrate more women into conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes – but often with a focus on descriptive rather than substantive representation. Less attention has been paid to robust prevention efforts. For example, while investments to address the gendered impacts of conflict, violence and insecurity have historically been inadequate to match the scale of the challenge. In 2022 global military expenditure surged for the eighth consecutive year to an unprecedented \$2.24 trillion, outpacing health spending even throughout the pandemic years and

32 United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2023. Report of the Secretary-General (Special Edition). Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet. 2023, April 27. https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/SDG%20Progress%20Report%20Special%20Edition_o.pdf

33 Commission on the Status of Women. 2022. Report of the Secretary-General: Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change, Environmental and Disaster Risk Reduction Policies and Programmes. United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2022, January 4. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3956348?ln=en>

34 United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2023. Report of the Secretary-General (Special Edition). Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet. 2023, April 27. https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/SDG%20Progress%20Report%20Special%20Edition_o.pdf

35 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2022 (Paris, 2022), cited in United Nations. 2023. Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace. <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-new-agenda-for-peace-en.pdf>.

36 UN Women. 2023. Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2023. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2023-en.pdf>

37 Commission on the Status of Women. 2019. Report of the Secretary-General: Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcomes of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly. United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2019, December 13. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3850087?ln=en>

38 UN Women. 2022. Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2022. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2022-en_o.pdf

39 Ibid.

despite the continued uptake of FFP.^{40,41} However, as militarization continues apace, the structural causes of conflict and insecurity – including colonialism and unequal power relations, economic models based on exploitation and extraction, gender inequality, food insecurity and the climate crisis – remain unaddressed, perpetuating insecurity and instability and pushing sustainable development further out of reach.⁴²

The FFP aspiration of **addressing overlapping systems of discrimination can provide the basis for interrogating gender norms, colonialism and unequal power relations as root causes of conflict, centering the experiences of marginalized communities, including women and girls.**⁴³ Additionally, to shift the focus to conflict prevention and develop a long-term vision and strategy for achieving positive peace, a feminist approach to foreign policy allows adherents to interrogate and oppose increased securitization as responses to global issues, such as climate change and migration. Such an approach also prioritizes financial resources towards addressing critical needs in conflict-affected contexts by focusing on funding to local women’s rights organizations and national gender machineries.^{44,45}



PARTNERSHIPS – Goal 17

SDG 17 recognizes the role of multistakeholder partnerships in mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources to support the achievement of the SDGs in all countries, particularly developing countries, and further seeks to encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, in line with commitments and recommendations in the BDPfA, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Declaration commemorating the 75 years of the United Nations and the report of the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism.⁴⁶

Partnerships among civil society (including feminist movements), governments and the United Nations system have been the backbone of global efforts to advance gender

equality. These relationships have been instrumental in the development and adoption of global normative frameworks, including CEDAW, the BDPfA and the WPS agenda. While partnerships built on a participatory, inclusive, and non-hierarchical model of collaboration and co-creation have been a strength in the current FFP space, a closer alignment of FFP with SDG 17 targets can further enhance existing approaches. First, States applying a feminist foreign policy lens can focus on **strengthening policy coherence for sustainable development** in their own FFP frameworks at global, regional and national levels.

Second, **the alignment of FFP with SDG 17 targets and their means of implementation can also facilitate the integration of the private sector into multi-stakeholder partnerships for gender equality. Private-sector engagement can be catalytic for sustainable development and FFP objectives, particularly at the country level.** While promising models – such as the Generation Equality Forum, the United Nations Global Compact and the Women’s Empowerment Principles – have emerged, it is important to ensure the fair and equitable representation and influence in decision-making of all partners and to address concerns over balancing private sector investments for gender equality and the impact of corporate activity on all women and girls. Both benefits and risks need to be shared equitably.

Effective partnerships can also be invaluable in contributing to the availability of high-quality data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts (Target 17.18). Investments in this area within the context of FFP should also include **financial allocations for research in the Global South and the Global North, drawing from and building upon a body of diverse data sources for feminist analysis and evaluation. Such data can then inform the development of robust accountability mechanisms for FFP frameworks that are complementary to the SDGs.**

40 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. 2023. World military expenditure reaches new record high as European spending surges. 2023, April 24. <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2023/world-military-expenditure-reaches-new-record-high-european-spending-surges>

41 UN Women. 2023. Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2023. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2023-en.pdf>

42 Bernarding, N. & Lunz, K. 2020. "A feminist foreign policy for the European Union". <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57cd7cd9d482e9784e4ccc34/t/5ef48af0d8e71d7968ded22b/1593084682210/Feminist+Foreign+Policy+for+the+European+Union+-+Centre+for+Feminist+Foreign+Policy.pdf>

43 Baldwin, G & Hynes, T. 2022. The Securitization of Gender: A Primer. IPI Global Observatory. 2022, October 11. <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2022/10/the-securitization-of-gender-a-primer/>

44 Commission on the Status of Women. 2019. Report of the Secretary-General: Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcomes of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly. United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2019, December 13. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3850087?ln=en>

45 True, J. 2023. Feminist Foreign Policy for Germany. Call for Papers, Federal Foreign Ministry of Germany. <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2586992/cc51d484ff00daae765d0009e51d87/true-data.pdf>

46 United Nations. (n.d.) Multi-stakeholder Partnerships. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/multi-stakeholder-partnerships>

Feminist Foreign Policy in the context of the Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda Report

The Declaration commemorating the 75th anniversary of the United Nations requested the Secretary-General to share recommendations “to advance our common agenda and to respond to current and future challenges”.⁴⁷ In 2021, the Secretary-General published **Our Common Agenda** (OCA), a blueprint for action to accelerate the implementation of existing agreements, including the SDGs.⁴⁸ The report prioritizes gender equality and outlines five relevant transformative measures: the repeal of discriminatory laws and the full realization of equal rights; the promotion of gender parity; women’s economic inclusion; the inclusion of younger women; and an emergency response plan to end violence against women and girls and other harmful social norms.⁴⁹ Following the publication of the OCA report, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution to move forward with the Summit of the Future, during which Member States will endorse an action-oriented agenda of issues (the Pact for the Future).

To support preparations for the Summit, the Secretary-General has released a series of thematic [Policy Briefs](#) to expand on certain proposals in the OCA report and provide an analysis of their impact on the implementation of the SDGs. The thematic policy briefs integrate gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, discussing the intergenerational transmission of gender inequality as a key constraint to achieving a life of dignity and rights for future generations;⁵⁰ the impacts of complex global shocks on gender equality and the full spectrum of human rights;⁵¹ the potential for new digital technologies to facilitate and exacerbate gender-based violence;⁵² the inability of current economic growth measures to identify and

address intersectional forms of inequalities, including gender inequality;⁵³ the impact of gender-based hate speech and disinformation on women journalists, politicians, and activists;⁵⁴ and entrenched gender biases that affect the design and functioning of the international financial system.⁵⁵

The latest in the series of briefs, *The New Agenda for Peace*, reaffirms that **misogyny, patriarchy and oppressive power structures hinder progress toward gender equality and women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in political and public life everywhere; however, in conflict settings, the added challenges of institutional weakness, impunity and the spread of arms significantly exacerbate the risks.**⁵⁶ The brief includes an extensive discussion of gender inequality and the growing backlash against women’s rights – including their sexual and reproductive health and rights – as root causes of conflict. It recognizes that gender-based violence (GBV) can be a precursor to political violence and armed conflict and calls for concrete action to secure women’s full, equal and meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making in peace and security. It also calls for commitment to the eradication of all forms of gender-based violence and the provision of sustained, predictable and flexible financing for gender equality and women’s rights organizations, including by reducing the share of public resources diverted to military activity and expenditures.

The OCA report calls for a “renewed social contract anchored in human rights” with the “active and equal participation of women and girls” as a key component, while the *New Agenda for Peace* reaffirms the United Nations position on the indivisibility of human rights and the commitment to their full realization, including the right to development, to accelerate progress toward the SDGs.

47 United Nations General Assembly. 2020. Declaration on the Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the United Nations. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/248/80/PDF/N2024880.pdf?OpenElement>

48 United Nations. 2021. Report of the Secretary-General: Our Common Agenda. https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf

49 Ibid.

50 United Nations. 2023. Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 1: To Think and Act for Future Generations. <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-future-generations-en.pdf>

51 United Nations. 2023. Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 2: Strengthening the International Response to Complex Global Shocks – An Emergency Platform. <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-emergency-platform-en.pdf>

52 United Nations. 2023. Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 5: A Global Digital Compact – An Open, Free and Secure Digital Future for All. <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-gobal-digi-compact-en.pdf>

53 United Nations. 2023. Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 4: Valuing What Counts – Framework to Progress Beyond Gross Domestic Product. <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-beyond-gross-domestic-product-en.pdf>

54 United Nations. 2023. Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 8: Information Integrity on Digital Platforms. <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-information-integrity-en.pdf>

55 United Nations. 2023. Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 6: Reforms to the International Financial Architecture. <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-international-finance-architecture-en.pdf>

56 United Nations. 2023. Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace. <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-new-agenda-for-peace-en.pdf>

Adopting FFP principles can allow states to consistently apply and pursue concerted action to counter the global erosion of the rights of all women and girls.

The OCA and its thematic briefs also include references to resources for gender equality, in the form of official development assistance (ODA) commitments, funding for women’s rights organizations, and investments in care or policies to bridge digital divides. As discussions around the reform of the international financial architecture and economic system are underway, the principles associated with FFP can provide critical insights to ensure that the benefits of these reforms accrue equitably to all by identifying those left behind and facing multiple forms of discrimination; reaffirming the primacy and indivisibility of human rights; and challenging interlinked systems of discrimination. FFP can also propose a comprehensive plan of action to channel resources to gender-responsive and climate-just solutions.

The meaningful representation of women and girls in leadership and decision-making positions is a cornerstone of FFP and a key component of recommendations in the OCA and its thematic briefs, particularly in the form of quotas and similar measures to address descriptive representation. This alignment with the FFP discourse can support the strengthening of calls to advance women’s equal and fair representation, including through quotas and temporary special measures.

The few references across the OCA and its thematic briefs to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination point to a growing awareness of compounding inequalities in the United Nations, but also to an opportunity for the system to consistently embed this intersectional approach in the analysis of interconnected global systems and the injustices entrenched within them. This approach could better enable the United Nations to meet the key commitment in the 2030 Agenda to ‘leave no one behind’, guide efforts to address global challenges and enhance the transformative potential of negotiated outcomes.

The Secretary-General’s vision for a networked multilateralism is in line with the collaborative and inclusive principle associated with FFP. The United Nations, including

Member States, should strengthen their relationships with women’s rights organizations and movements around the world to ensure their experiences and perspectives are fully incorporated into the negotiated outcomes of the Summit of the Future by addressing power dynamics and imbalances to ensure that partnerships remain equitable, reflective of the perspectives of all, and aware of the risks stemming from the unchecked influence of powerful stakeholders.

Examples of FFP in the United Nations

UN Women has been working with partners at the global, regional and country levels to provide technical support and identify opportunities for advancing this emerging agenda of FFP through its global normative influence, convening power and strong coordination role.^{57,58} In 2022, the Entity published [Feminist Foreign Policies: An Introduction](#) and is committed to continuously generate new knowledge together with its partners to shape FFP.

Due to the successful advocacy of networks of women in diplomacy, in 2022, the [United Nations General Assembly declared the 24th of June the International Day of Women in Diplomacy](#), inviting the United Nations system and all relevant stakeholders to observe the day through education and raising public awareness.

The **FFP+ group** in New York brings together a growing number of Member States implementing, or considering adopting, FFP or that are committed to the advancement of gender equality through their multilateral engagement. As of August 2023, the group consists of Albania, Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Israel, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Mongolia, Rwanda, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, and Tunisia.

57 UN Women. 2022. Feminist foreign policies: An Introduction. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Brief-Feminist-foreign-policies-en_o.pdf

58 UN Women. 2022. Corporate Evaluation on UN Women’s Policy Advocacy Work. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/Evaluation-Corporate-evaluation-of-UN-Womens-policy-advocacy-work-en.pdf>

Conclusion and recommendations

As momentum for gender-responsive approaches to foreign policy, including FFP, continues to grow, progress toward the SDGs – and SDG 5 in particular – remains well below 2030 targets. This analysis explored opportunities to accelerate advancement towards SDG targets by demonstrating the interconnectedness of FFP and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Key recommendations for consideration

- Integrate gender considerations across all aspects of sustainable development and analyse the impact of FFP in an intersectional manner.** Pay close attention to SDG 5 given that none of its targets is projected to be achieved by 2030 at the current rate of progress. Prioritize dismantling discriminatory laws and social norms and implementing special measures and quotas for equal representation.
- FFP initiatives should be adequately resourced, designed in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, and evaluated at regular intervals with the engagement of the communities they affect.** Particular attention should be accorded to developing and maintaining appropriate accountability mechanisms for FFP, including through, for instance, SDG reporting, United Nations-led intergovernmental processes, tracking tools for gender-equality targets across investments, and gender-responsive planning and budgeting for public governance.
- Adequately resource sustainable development initiatives.** This includes fulfilling ODA commitments in FFP frameworks, prioritizing funding for women's rights organizations and national gender machineries and allocating resources to research and policy development.
- Develop comprehensive, fully costed national action plans for the implementation of the WPS agenda,** which discuss both domestic and global threats to the human security of all women and girls and focus on the prevention pillar, including through efforts to resist the securitization of responses to issues like migration. **Urgently scale up resources to promote peace, including by reducing military expenditures.**
- Allocate sufficient resources to support global and regional research on FFP** that builds a diverse evidence base to inform evaluation and accountability mechanisms for FFP frameworks.
- Scale up and amplify successful funding models** such as the Spotlight Initiative and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund through FFP commitments.
- Align climate and environmental policies within the framework of FFP with broader efforts to advance gender equality,** recognizing women and girls as agents of change and facilitating their full and equal participation in the design and implementation of climate action policies. At the structural level, examine and adjust policies – including national policies – that are detrimental to the climate and environment.
- Ensure that FFP supports a just transition,** including through moving beyond GDP as the main indicator of economic progress and addressing the impact of corporate activities – particularly in extractive industries – on those facing multiple forms of intersecting discrimination.
- Use FFP to shift the focus of the WPS agenda and peacebuilding more broadly to conflict prevention and develop a long-term vision and strategy** for achieving positive peace, grounded in an intersectional analysis of gender norms, colonialism and unequal power relations as root causes of conflict. This includes resisting the securitization of responses to global challenges; urgently scaling up the resources needed to address critical needs in conflict-affected countries and supporting the peaceful resolution of conflicts; and supporting women peacebuilders and human rights defenders.
- Invest in capacity-building and support for developing countries** to significantly increase the availability of high-quality data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.
- Engage in multi-stakeholder partnerships to strengthen FFP,** respecting the leadership and policy space of partners to implement context-specific sustainable development policies and FFP frameworks. Facilitate the engagement of the private sector in multi-stakeholder partnerships, ensuring the following: all perspectives and voices can equitably influence decision-making; risks and rewards are shared fairly and equitably; and private investments in gender equality are not undermined by the impacts of corporate activities – including those of multinational corporations and extractive industries – on all women and girls.

- **Facilitate and support multi-stakeholder partnerships, including with civil society, to inform the evolution of FFP.** Consider existing models, including the Generation Equality Forum, for partnerships that seek the fair and equal participation of all.
- **Leverage the United Nations system's global reach and influence to provide technical support** and facilitate dialogues on gender-responsive approaches in foreign policy, including FFP, and elevate and disseminate regional and country-level examples of promising practices.

This policy brief synthesizes research findings, analyses, think pieces and policy recommendations on Feminist Foreign Policies and presents their nexus with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. It was drafted by Foteini Papagiotti (International Center for Research on Women) and peer reviewed by Professor Toni Haastrup (University of Manchester). It received technical inputs from Pablo Castillo Diaz, Nargis Azizova, Diana Espinosa, Karen Valero Rodriguez, Catarina Carvalho, Lana Ackar and Rachel Weston (UN Women). Coordination and overall technical guidance was provided by Diana Lutta (UN Women).

Design and Layout: Oksana Iashchuk

Copyediting: Kelly O'Nelly

220 East 42nd Street
New York, New York 10017, USA
Tel: 646-781-4400
Fax: 646-781-4444
www.unwomen.org

Annex I – Current FFP frameworks

COUNTRY AND YEAR OF PUBLICATION	KEY PRIORITY AREAS ⁵⁹	ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS: EXAMPLES
Sweden, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full enjoyment of human rights. • Freedom from physical, psychological and sexual violence. • Participation in preventing and resolving conflicts and post-conflict peacebuilding. • Political participation and influence. • Economic rights and empowerment. • Sexual and reproductive health and rights. • Reform foreign service policies and practices. 	No reference
Canada, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. • Human dignity, covering humanitarian action, health and nutrition, and education. • Growth that works for everyone and targets areas such as sustainable agriculture, green technologies and renewable energy. • Environment and climate action focusing on adaptation and mitigation, as well as on water management. • Inclusive governance, including democracy, human rights, the rule of law and good governance. • Peace and security, promoting inclusive peace processes and combatting gender-based violence. • By 2021–2022 at the latest, at least 95% of Canada’s bilateral international development assistance investments will either target or integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (at least 80% significant, 15% principal). 	Report to Parliament on the Government of Canada’s International Assistance 2021-2022
Mexico, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream gender equality, human rights and intersectionality across all areas of foreign policy. • Improve gender parity in foreign service. • Reduce GBV and harassment in the foreign service. • Making the contributions of women in the foreign service visible. 	
Spain, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women, peace and security. • Violence against women and girls. • Human rights of women and girls. • Participation of women in decision-making. • Economic justice and the empowerment of women. • Reform of institutional practices in foreign service. 	<p>High-level Advisory Group to shape future priorities and action.</p> <p>Mandates annual, public reporting on implementation progress.</p> <p>No available reports yet.</p>

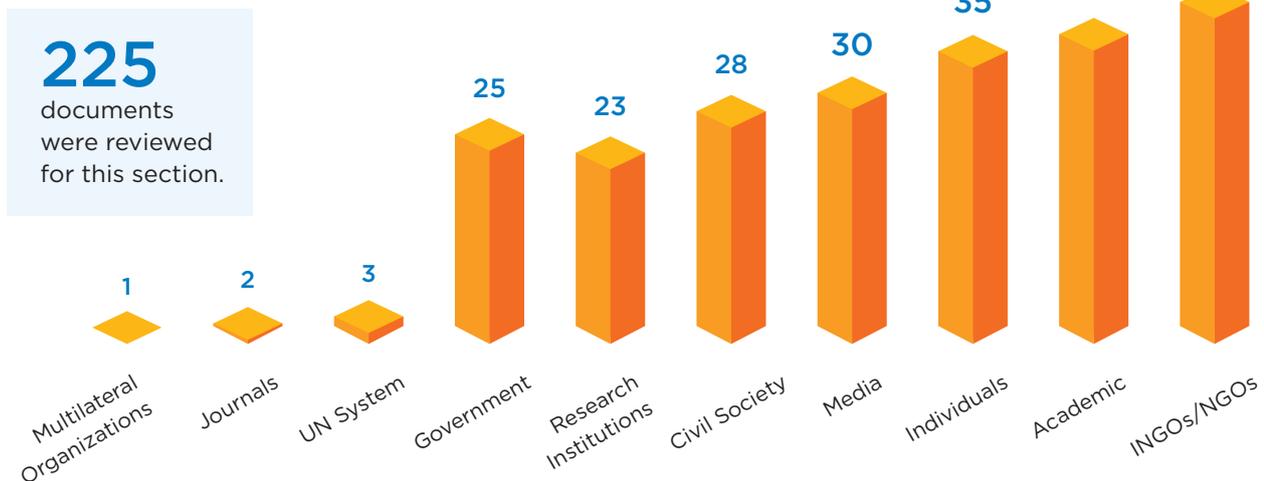
⁵⁹ For comprehensive lists of priority areas, please refer to the published handbook or guidelines.

<p>Germany*, 2021</p> <p>*Germany has also published a handbook on feminist development policy and is currently in the process of developing an action plan for its operationalization. Both documents are aligned, reinforcing coherence and cross-ministry coordination.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 85% of project funding on a gender-sensitive basis and 8% on a gender-transformative basis by 2025. • Peace and security. • Humanitarian assistance and crisis management. • Human rights. • Climate diplomacy and external energy policy. • Foreign trade and investment policy. • Cultural and societal diplomacy. • Gender equality, diversity and inclusion in the foreign service. • Equal opportunities and a discrimination-free working environment. • Dialogue and network-building. 	<p>Forum for critical exchange with experts on all aspects of feminist foreign policy.</p> <p>Minister of State as well as the Federal Government Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Assistance at the Federal Foreign Office will support this exchange.</p> <p>High-ranking steering committee in the Federal Foreign Office to oversee implementation.</p> <p>Appointment of a woman Ambassador for FFP by the German Federal Foreign Ministry.</p>
<p>Chile, 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights and strengthening democracy with a focus on gender equality. • Promote the eradication and elimination of gender-based violence. • Women’s empowerment and improved representation. • Women, peace and security. • International economic relations and gender. • Climate change and gender. • Science, technology and innovation. • Comprehensive care system. • Review institutional culture and structures. 	<p>Gender Affairs Division in the Foreign Affairs Ministry to coordinate efforts.</p> <p>A website with information, and monitoring mechanisms.</p>
<p>Colombia, 2023 (currently in process of formulation)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Justice: Participation and representation; Trade and work (paid and unpaid: Care systems); Human mobility (migration) • Total Peace: PAN Resolution 1325; GBV; drugs and security • Environmental Justice: Environmental protection, conservation and restoration; Climate change; Biodiversity • An internal regulation of the Ministry was issued that establishes the objective of achieving parity in all management positions. 	<p>Information systems: Monitoring of transformations and indicators</p> <p>Participation mechanism: social organizations, LGBTIQ+ people and women in their diversity</p> <p>To support execution, an investment project was formulated and a working group formed.</p>

Annex II – Methodology

This brief included a literature review of 265 sources in total.

Sources on Feminist Foreign Policies



1. Sources on the Sustainable Development Agenda and Goals

Thirty-four sources were reviewed for this section. These were primarily published by the UN system, including reports on progress toward the sustainable development goals, progress toward achieving SDG 5 on gender equality, and the implementation of commitments in the BDPfA both by Member States and by the UN system.

Non-UN sources included progress reports and recommendations for the priority areas of Agenda 2030 (people, planet, prosperity, peace, partnerships).

2. Sources on FFP and the UN system in the context of the Our Common Agenda report

Twelve documents were reviewed for this section, including Our Common Agenda report and the Policy Briefs published by the Secretary-General in preparation for the Summit and Pact for the Future.