
Building a world community

mondial

Canadian Edition

Published by the World Federalist Movement - Canada, a non-governmental organization that advocates more just and effective global governance through the application of the principles of democratic federalism to world affairs.

VOL. 4, ISSUE 2
SPRING 2021

Next Steps for Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy

by Monique Cuillerier

In the fall of 2020, Global Affairs Canada began a process to consolidate and build on the Government of Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy, which included soliciting submissions from interested parties.

The government suggested areas for discussion, including lessons that can be learned from the experience of other countries, the effectiveness of Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) tools, methods for building multilateral alliances for gender equality and inclusion, feminist approaches to evaluation, and relevant emerging policy areas.

Since the 2015 federal election, a range of policies and program initiatives have been introduced by the federal government to apply a feminist approach across international policy areas, including Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, the Trade Diversification Strategy, the "Strong, Secure, Engaged" Defence Policy, the second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, and the appointment of a Women Peace and Security Ambassador.

As described in the scene-setter released by the government for this review, feminist foreign policy "aims to be the international expression of these ongoing, coordinated, and whole-of-government efforts."

In the mandate letter given to newly appointed Foreign Affairs Minister Marc Garneau in January 2021, he is tasked with “building on ongoing consultations, continue to develop and implement Canada’s feminist foreign policy with the support of colleagues and partner organizations.” Feminist foreign policy was not mentioned in previous mandate letters.

The federal government’s outreach for input on feminist foreign policy was accompanied by a series of civil society consultations in November, conducted by the Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group, an informal group of civil society organizations. A summary of the inputs received during these consultations, along with resulting recommendations, are available at [amnesty.ca/ffp](https://www.amnesty.ca/ffp)

As well, the Women, Peace and Security Network – Canada launched a blog series in December that is continuing, with contributions from members on different aspects of Canada’s feminist foreign policy as an additional contribution to the current discussion.

Global Affairs have indicated they will produce a report when their process is complete.

WFMC provided the following submission to Global Affairs Canada:

The World Federalist Movement – Canada is a not-for-profit research, education and advocacy organization that supports the application of the principles of federalism to world affairs, in order that global governance becomes more equitable, just and democratically accountable.

This challenge of finding the means, the legal and political structures, to adequately and democratically address global problems is in line with the development of a feminist foreign policy and we are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this consultation.

We recognize the efforts that have been made by the federal government to incorporate elements of a feminist foreign policy, as demonstrated through the second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, which were both launched in 2017, along with the appointment of Canada’s first Ambassador for women, peace and security in 2019.

Furthermore, the development of Canada's feminist international assistance policy and the current defence policy are clear steps towards a broad-based integration of a feminist foreign policy.

We also acknowledge, though it is outside of our

particular areas of focus, the government's inclusion of gender equality within trade policy.

However, much remains to be done in order to actualize the promise of a full feminist foreign policy. Some of the organizing frameworks that should underlie a feminist foreign policy include:

upholding human rights and humanitarian law principles;

a commitment to strengthen the rule of law;

an approach to international peace and security that prioritizes the prevention of armed conflict as well as post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction.

"Sustainable security," "common security" and "human security" are complementary policy frameworks that foster more people-centered and holistic approaches to multilateral cooperation, consistent with a feminist foreign policy.

A feminist foreign policy must embrace processes at all levels that are inclusive of women, LGBTQI2S+ individuals, migrants, and all others impacted by government of Canada policies and programs. A feminist foreign policy must strive to be equally applied in all contexts. This means that there must be policy coherence in Canada's foreign policy, including in its multilateral commitments.

While Canada's second National Action Plan on WPS was a significant improvement upon the first, consideration now needs to be given to the C-NAP's next iteration and how those improvements can be built upon, including through the increased inclusion of domestic considerations and incorporating an explicitly feminist methodology for assessment and evaluation.

A feminist foreign policy needs to embrace disarmament, and in particular people-centered humanitarian disarmament. An initial step in this direction would be Canada's accession to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Further to this, it is unfortunate that Canada's current personnel commitments to UN peacekeeping have fallen to historic lows. The Elsie Initiative is welcome, but a small part of the larger picture. Canada should strive to increase the number of women peacekeepers who are deployed, and encourage other countries to do so as well, but merely adding women does not constitute an example of feminist foreign policy in action. Acknowledging the ongoing struggles with sexual abuse involving peacekeepers and peacekeeping missions and exploring innovative and inclusive methods for addressing this situation needs to be part of the overall policy shift.

As Canada moves forward in the development of its feminist foreign policy, steps need to be taken to ensure that it is fully integrated across the broad spectrum of government activities, programs, and processes that constitute foreign policy. The process will take time. A truly FFP will be transformative, changing fundamentally how Canada does foreign policy.