



## GENDER AT THE SUMMIT

Understanding the issues at stake at the  
Generation Equality Forum



GENDER IN GEOPOLITICS INSTITUTE

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N A P O L E O N S

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GREAT PEOPLE.  
GREAT MOMENTS.  
GREAT PLACES.

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# List of acronyms

**AFD:** (Agence Française de Développement - French Development Agency)

**CEDAW:** Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

**FACJ Coalition:** Feminist Action for Climate Justice Coalition

**SRHR:** Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

**GEF:** Generation Equality Forum

**VIP :**Abortion (Voluntary interruption of pregnancy)

**LGBTI+:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, etc.

**MENA:** Middle East, North Africa

**OECD-DAC:** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee

**IO(s):** International Organization(s)

**YO:**Youth-led Organization(s)

**UN:** United Nations

**NGO:** Non-Governmental Organization(s)

**CSOs:** Civil Society Organizations

**GDP:** Gross Domestic Product

**UNDP:** United Nations Development program

**CS:** Civil Society

**SRH:** Sexual and reproductive health

**STEM:** Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

**ICT:** Information and Communication Technologies

**GBV:** Gender-based violence

# Glossary

## Care

"According to Joan Tronto, care is defined as 'a species of activity that includes everything we do to maintain, contain, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible.' Care encompasses any activity that aims at taking care of others, be it in a family context (domestic work and emotional labor such as listening and conflict management) or in a professional setting (care jobs being nursing, support to vulnerable people, social services,...).<sup>1</sup>"

## Feminist Foreign Policy

A recent concept in international relations, it can be defined as the promotion of equality between women and men in the overall foreign policy of a State<sup>2</sup>. Its conception and content vary depending on the State adopting it.

## Systemic discrimination

"Systemic discrimination involves the procedures, routines and organisational culture of any organisation that, often without intent, contribute to less favourable outcomes for minority groups than for the majority of the population, from the organisation's policies, programmes, employment, and services.<sup>3</sup>"

## Equal pay

"The principle of equal pay for equal work for women and men has long been enshrined in European legislation and is a cornerstone of equal treatment for women and men. An employer must pay equally two

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1 Joan Tronto, *Democratic Care and Democracy of Care*, in *Qu'est-ce que le care?* edited by Pascal Molinier, Sandra Laugier, Patricia Paperman, Petite Bibliothèque Payot, Paris, 2009.

2 Piotr Smolar, «La Diplomatie féministe, un concept en devenir», *Le Monde*, 17 November 2020, [https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2020/11/17/la-diplomatie-feministe-un-concept-en-devenir\\_6060106\\_3210.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2020/11/17/la-diplomatie-feministe-un-concept-en-devenir_6060106_3210.html)

3 Council of Europe, «Systemic Discrimination», <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/intercultural-cities/systemic-discrimination>

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employees equally when doing the same work.<sup>4</sup>

### Gender equality

"Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities between the genders, taking into account the different interests, needs and priorities and recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men<sup>5</sup> .

### State feminism

Recent field of investigation in gender studies research, state feminism can refer to several action strategies. According to Martine Lévy, state feminism is a field of state intervention in favour of women, which leads to the adoption of legal measures, the creation of state administrations specialized in women's rights, etc.<sup>6</sup> Anne Revillard considers that state feminism also refers to all feminists working within the state apparatus, including governmental bodies responsible for gender equality<sup>7</sup>.

### Gender

Gender should not be confused with sex. The latter refers to a biological concept referring to the biological, physiological and anatomical characteristics defined at birth<sup>8</sup>. Sex therefore refers to the reproductive organs. It is an immutable and fixed characteristic in the absence of medical intervention. The terms "male", "female" and

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4 Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, «Wage Gap», [https://igym-iefh.belgium.be/fr/activites/emploi/ecart\\_salarial](https://igym-iefh.belgium.be/fr/activites/emploi/ecart_salarial)

5 Report «Gender Equality and the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation», Special Rapporteur, Leo Heller, page 7, [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Water/10anniversary/Gender\\_FR.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Water/10anniversary/Gender_FR.pdf)

6 Martine Lévy, «Le féminisme d'État en France - 1965-1985 : 20 ans de prise en charge institutionnelle de l'égalité professionnelle entre hommes et femmes», Institut des Sciences Politiques de Paris, Thesis defended in 1988, <http://www.theses.fr/1988IEPP0009>

7 Anne Revillard, «State Feminism: Constructions of the Object», 2006, <https://annerevillard.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/revillard-2006-fc3a9minisme-detat-doc-de-travail.pdf>

8 Ganzfried Miriam, Dissertation «Gender as a political resource in Switzerland: the perception of the political elite», Interdisciplinary Unit for Gender Studies, Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, University of Geneva, 2009, [https://www.unige.ch/etudes-genre/files/7214/0316/9719/Miriam\\_Ganzfried\\_Memoire\\_Master.pdf](https://www.unige.ch/etudes-genre/files/7214/0316/9719/Miriam_Ganzfried_Memoire_Master.pdf)

"inter- sex" refer to the sex of an individual. Gender is the result of a learning process.

Gender is the set of social meanings associated with the biological characteristics of human bodies. It is therefore a set of representations, assumptions and expectations assigned to persons, objects, entities, concepts or ideas, based on their association with femininity or masculinity. These characteristics are based on social, cultural, political and historical constructs, as well as on an opposition's relationship, power and hierarchy between so-called feminine values, which are often discredited compared to so-called masculine<sup>9</sup> characteristics. The concept of gender has been generalized in social science research and has undergone a paradigm shift: all feminist theories mobilize the concept of gender.

### **Gender minority(ies)**

The term "gender minorities" refers to all individuals whose gender identity (female, male, other), or whose gender expression (male, female, other) differs from their sex (male, female) assigned at birth.<sup>10</sup> The 1990s ushered in the widespread use of the acronym LGBTI+ to refer to gender minorities, which leads to the terms: lesbian, gay, transgender, intersex. The "+" indicates that the gender spectrum is not necessarily limited to these orientations or gender identities.

### **International Organization (IO)**

Any organization, whether or not composed of States, established by a treaty or other instrument governed by international law. It is established, inter alia, for the purpose of coordinating action on a particular subject<sup>11</sup> at the global, continental or regional level.

### **Philanthropy**

"Modern philanthropy is the transfer of resources (financial, in-kind,

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9 Bereni Laure et al. Introduction aux études sur le genre, Brussels De Boeck, 2020

10 Centers for diseases control and prevention, "Terminology", <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/terminology/sexual-and-gender-identity-terms.htm>

11 United Nations, "The regime of responsibility of international organizations requires a prior definition of the concept of 'international organization'" AG/J/402, press release, 27 October 2003, <https://www.un.org/press/fr/2003/AGJ402.doc.htm>

voluntary) freely given by private actors to serve [what they consider to be] the common good and the general interest: health, education, solidarity, culture, environment...<sup>12</sup>"

## Private Sector

"It is commonly accepted that this term reflects all legal entities that are not run by the State, although the State may regulate them in part. It thus refers to the vast majority of enterprises, whether they are constituted in the form of companies, associations, NGOs or foundations, regardless of their corporate purpose or activities.<sup>13</sup>

## Civil society

The "notion of civil society refers to the self-organization of citizens outside the state, the political world and the economic world.<sup>14</sup>"

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12 Charhon Francis, Long live philanthropy! Paris, Le Cherche-Midi, 2016

13 Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques, "secteur privé", <https://www.vocabulairepolitique.be/secteur-prive/>

14 *Ibid.*

## Summary note

In a context where the crisis of the Covid-19 continues to threaten the the health of individuals and disrupt the economic and social environments of all States, women's rights are on the decline in many regions of the world, and gender-based and sexual violence is increasing drastically in many countries. Inter-country events continue to be affected by violent events, such as political, economic and social conflicts and crises with devastating consequences. At the institutional level, debates are affected by strong opposition on human rights issues, at the heart of which the rights of women and other gender minorities are.

Public policies to achieve real equality between women and men remain timid where they are implemented. An alliance hostile to the rights of women and gender minorities (LGBTI+) has emerged in recent years and continues to grow stronger. In view of this, civil society is sounding the alarm. In order to respond to these challenges, it was essential to initiate a new mobilization of international society: the idea of the Generation Equality Forum was born. It was held in two phases, in Mexico City from 29th to 31st March 2021 and in Paris from 30th June to 2nd July 2021. Its goal: to give fresh impetus to the feminist agenda at the multilateral level. To this end, the GEF proposes an original partnership format aimed at including actors from civil society, the private sector, philanthropy and institutions. This framework should allow for funding and concrete, multi-actor and multi-thematic actions.

The aim of this summit was to provide concrete answers to the challenges of gender equality. Civil society was largely involved in its organization and made its demands heard. However, the future of the Equality Forum remains uncertain as tensions over women's and LGBTI+ rights continue to crystallize on the international scene.

Although this international meeting was unique and the themes addressed in the coalitions of action relevant to the advancement of women's rights, the identification of a certain number of obstacles are doomed to a relative failure in the implementation of the Acceleration

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Agenda presented at the Forum. A significant part of the commitments made show a lack of clarity and vision for the future. The glaring absence of actors who are essential to bringing about changes in gender equality, as well as the disparities between investments by different coalitions, give rise to fears of a lack of global consideration of the challenges to be met. Finally, the lack of an accountability framework compromises the effectiveness of the promises made.

# Preface

Our think tank is motivated by the need to adopt gender as a tool for exploring and understanding international relations. The Gender In Geopolitics Institute strongly recommends a more gender-sensitive future and for the adoption of tangible actions for gender equality, respect for women's rights and LGBTI+ people.

The Generation Equality Forum (GEF) has shown a clear international commitment to gender equality and the rights of women and girls. But we cannot be satisfied with a moment of hope when most women and girls in the world live in poorer conditions than men and boys; when their rights are denied; when their prospects for personal achievement, their ambitions, count for less than those of men and boys. Women and girls want more. More rights, more respect, more opportunities. They want to be listened to, to speak out, to make decisions for themselves and future generations, and to be confident in their future. The Generation Equality Forum cannot simply settle for dangling these possibilities through pious promises. Those who have the power to change their lives cannot listen for the sake of a ceremony and then turn away from their responsibilities towards half the world's population...

Our objective here is multiple: to call on the responsibility of governments, companies and other actors who took part in this event to respect their commitments, to ensure that these commitments are fulfilled and, finally, to participate in the influence of this international event, which receives so little media attention. In other words, we want to question the GEF's aftermath, think about its sustainability and ensure its concrete effectiveness for the lives of women and girls in the foreseeable future.

To this end, this report whose mission is to provide a context for the Forum, to outline the strong commitments made, and above all to take a long-term view of what can really be expected for gender equality. At a time when the health crisis has made women and girls around the world even more vulnerable, the fallout from this event is of major importance. Yet, the accountability system for the commitments announced at

the Generation Equality Forum has yet to be revealed and the specific issues of women's groups already marginalized before the pandemic have not been considered during the diplomatic conversations at the Forum. However, through this report, we welcome the important involvement of young feminists, activists and civil society in the discussions, who are more than ever aware that today's decisions will have decisive consequences on tomorrow's lives.

# Introduction

"Gender equality is essentially about power, and power in a world that is still largely male dominated, with a culture that is still largely patriarchal [...] power is very rarely given. It has to be taken.<sup>15</sup>" With these words, Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations (UN), opened his speech at the Generation Equality Forum.

Co-organized by Mexico, in Mexico City from March 29 to 31, and France, in Paris from June 30 to July 2, under the aegis of UN Women, this original forum, bringing together several States, civil society, the private sector, various foundations and international organizations, is taking place in a tense international context. For the past decade, the status quo for women's and girls' rights has been maintained, particularly within the UN, due to a tug-of-war between states wishing to serve the cause of women and those that, on the contrary, hinder any form of progress. In certain circumstances, we are witnessing a regression in women's rights (in the area of abortion, for example, or access to the political sphere). The Covid-19 pandemic has also shown the fragility of feminist advances, which are quickly called into question in times of crisis. In this sense, the organization of an international event such as the GEF proved necessary.

During the opening ceremony of the Forum, the hosts successively set the pace: there is an urgent need to defend the rights of women and gender minorities. This ceremony had several highlights, allowing its participants to make the voices of those concerned heard and their vision of an egalitarian future. The participants called on everyone to participate in the common effort of promotion of women's human rights around the world.

On the eve of the Generation Equality Forum, Horizon 2030's inter-

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15 UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres at Forum Opening Ceremony, Press Release, UN "Proud of Parity at the UN, Guterres Sees Difference in Quality of Decisions and Ability to Put Gender Equality at Centre of Policy," June 30, 2021, <https://www.un.org/press/fr/2021/sgsm20805.doc.htm>

national survey<sup>16</sup> highlights citizens' expectations for gender equality. The study reveals an unequivocal international expectation for gender equality among the population: 80% of respondents consider gender equality to be an important issue<sup>17</sup>. They call for more action in this area: reforms of discriminatory laws, awareness-raising campaigns, data collection on girls and women, and evaluation of progress in gender equality. Respondents want these actions to be carried out "as a matter of urgency"<sup>18</sup> and ask for guarantees. These efforts, they noted, should be focused on the most marginalised groups: women and girls with disabilities, refugee women, women from ethnic minorities and immigrants, as well as people from the LGBTI+ community. It seems that the Equality Generation Forum has taken on the mission of responding to these citizen expectations.

What is the Generation Equality Forum, what is its purpose, and in what context does it take place? Who are the stakeholders? What effects are already measurable, and what immediate and future benefits can we expect? Finally, the most important question, that of accountability and the future of this forum, must be asked. During the Forum, the actors present were asked to formulate commitments, and a total of 1,076 commitments were made during the three days of mobilization that closed the event. They fall into several categories, and present a significant variety in terms of structure, stakeholders, issues addressed and amount of funding.

"Putting on gender glasses"<sup>19</sup> is how the approach of adopting a gendered approach to public issues can be described. When studying each issue, whether social, economic, environmental, health-related, etc., the gender lens must be used: how does the concept of gender interact

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16 Focus 2030 and Women Deliver, 2021, Report "Citizens' Aspirations for Gender Equality Worldwide: A Commitment to Change", <https://focus2030.org/sondage-international-genre>

17 *Ibid.*

18 *Ibid.*

19 French Senate, Information report "L'égalité femmes-hommes, un enjeu fondamental de solidarité internationale", 4 May 2021, <http://www.senat.fr/notice-rapport/2020/r20-550-notice.html>

with the object of study? For example, how does gender affect how a woman will experience a climate disaster? Which gender categories are most affected by an economic or social crisis?

The Paris Forum brought together nearly 50,000 participants, who came to listen to 500 speakers from all walks of life: gender specialists, members of civil society, business leaders, heads of state and government. During 93<sup>20</sup> discussions and two ceremonies, celebrating the opening and closing of the Forum, issues vital to the future of gender equality were addressed. The Forum generated enthusiasm and hope, but reservations were quickly expressed by some stakeholders, as well as by Forum participants and spectators. Expectations were high, and feminists from all over the world had their eyes set on Paris.

This report explains the historical and political context of the Forum, taking into account international political, health, economic, social and environmental developments. We also analyse the commitments made at the summit, using a comparative approach. We also take a long-term view of the future of the GEF, its sustainability and the effectiveness of the implementation of the commitments adopted, proposing new avenues for future research.

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<sup>20</sup> Program of the Generation Equality Forum, [https://forumgenerationegalite.fr/sites/default/files/2021-06/FGE\\_Programme\\_FR.pdf](https://forumgenerationegalite.fr/sites/default/files/2021-06/FGE_Programme_FR.pdf)

# Part I. The Generation Equality Forum: an ambitious and essential summit

## A. The genesis of the Generation Equality Forum

- Global awareness

In the course of history, feminism in the West has gone through several phases, sometimes expanding, sometimes retreating, reconfiguring itself according to changes in the social and political context. The different "moments" of feminism are generally identified in three waves. The first wave, considered to have established "egalitarian feminism"<sup>21</sup>, took place between the end of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the suffragette movement, which demanded the right to vote throughout Europe.

Institutional recognition came in June 1945, in the Preamble to the United Nations Charter. The signatories proclaimed their belief in the equal rights of women and men. The Second World War and its catastrophic consequences in Europe had shown the need to define universal human rights. However, the concept of universal citizenship does not erase discrimination based on gender, race, class, etc. In this sense, the UN General Assembly adopted the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which recognizes the specific situation of women, based on the 1948 Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This institutional recognition preceded new waves of feminist movements. The second feminist wave emerged during the "Trente Glorieuses", between 1945 and 1975. Their main demands: the right of women to freely dispose of their bodies, including the legalization of abortion and access to contraception.

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21 Cottais Camille, "Le féminisme libéral", Gender In Geopolitics Institute, October 21, 2020, <https://igg-geo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FT-le-fe%CC%81minisme-libe%C%81ral-Camille-Cottais-IGG.pdf>

The third wave refers to the mobilizations which took place in the context of the 1995 Beijing Conference. They were affected by questions of parity, empowerment and intersectionality. International organizations have played a leading role in the implementation of new strategies to tackle gender inequality: the UN has organized four conferences on women's rights since 1975. The Beijing conference, which brought together 17,000 participants, ended with the adoption by 189 States of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This ambitious document recognizes for the first time the systemic nature of gender inequality. It calls for the incorporation of gender equality into all national laws, and recognizes women's right to control their own bodies, including the right to abortion. Its signatories condemned gender-based violence and stressed the need to implement measures to reduce inequalities in education, employment, health, etc. Its program of action also provided for further meetings to reassess needs and analyze the progress made in identifying gender inequality issues.

- Beijing 25+: the advent of feminist foreign policy in response to civil society mobilization

The Generation Equality Forum is celebrating the 26th anniversary of the Beijing Conference. A new multilateral meeting was imperative to reassess the objectives of gender equality and to measure the success of its action program. It is incumbent on the Forum to succeed in readjusting the strategies put in place in 1995 in order to continue its work and overcome the obstacles identified. Since Beijing, the gender mainstreaming approach has spread. It incorporates a gender perspective in all areas and public policies. Twenty-five years later, the world has changed. The 2010s have been characterized by a new turn in feminist engagement around the world, culminating in the international #MeToo movement, which originated in the United States on social networks. This movement is widely seen as an expression of a fourth feminist wave addressing issues of rape culture, consent and sexual assault. The systemic nature of violence against women that it has revealed is now

impossible for public policy to ignore. The year 2021 also marks the anniversary of another multilateral milestone, that of the ratification of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000, a founding text which recognizes the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, guarantees their protection, and encourages their more meaningful participation in negotiations and peace processes<sup>22</sup>.

Over the past thirty years, feminist movements have grown exponentially and spontaneous movements from civil society are gaining institutional recognition. This renewed debate reflects a global awareness of the systemic nature of sexist violence and gender inequality. For example, the UN now uses the "gender inequality index", integrated with human development indices, to assess gender differences in the distribution of progress and to estimate the loss of human development due to the differences in treatment between women and men. Thus, gender inequalities, cost "\$95 billion a year" to sub-Saharan Africa in 2016, according to the UNDP<sup>23</sup>. Movements defending gender equality and LGBTI+ rights are now transnational and include new social realities: environmental, economic issues, inequalities based on race, religion, disability, etc. These struggles are largely driven by Youth which is a real driving force, implementing more audacious sets of action. Youth is involved in decision making and demand the implementation of gender policies.

Called upon by the commitment of civil society (associations, NGOs, think tanks), some governments have made a shift in the way they address the issue of gender equality, adopting political measures and specific means to this end. Five states in the world have adopted feminist foreign policy, an initiative launched by Sweden in 2014, followed

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22 Mayanja Rachel, "Armed Conflict and Women - Security Council Resolution 1325: Ten Years Later", <https://www.un.org/fr/chronicle/article/les-conflits-armes-et-le-femmes-la-resolution-1325-du-conseil-de-securite-dix-ans-dexistence>

23 Té-Léssia Assoko Joël, "Africa Human Development Report," Jeune Afrique, August 29, 2016, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/352684/societe/pnud-disparites-de-genre-coutent-95-milliards-de-dollars-an-a-lafrique-subsaharienne/>

by Canada, France, Luxembourg and Mexico, between 2017 and 2020<sup>24</sup>. Others, such as the Netherlands, Finland, Denmark, Switzerland, Belgium or New Zealand, "are pursuing the same agenda without declaring that they are conducting feminist foreign affairs"<sup>25</sup>. This new diplomacy generates support and enthusiasm<sup>26</sup>, but also questions.<sup>27</sup>

The concept of feminist foreign policy is a recent one, and it has a vague nature because of views' divergence on what it covers and the content of its agendas, both nationally and internationally. Sometimes judged to be declaratory, it is said to lack consistency. Moreover, it lacks coherence: failures of the States that contradict their feminist commitment are to be highlighted<sup>28</sup>. The states that have taken this initiative are criticized for their lack of political consistency. Sweden and France, particularly, sell arms in conflict zones that have a dramatic impact on the lives of the women concerned<sup>29</sup>. There is a risk that this diplomacy will be used to promote state interests<sup>30</sup>. Moreover, Mexico is the only country in the southern hemisphere to have taken such a step.

At national level, the progress observed is often confined to areas of

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24 Vos Coralie, "Des politiques étrangères 'féministes' qui manquent parfois de cohérence", Centre national de coopération au développement, 1er March 2021, <https://www.cncd.be/des-politiques-etrangees-etrangees-feministes-manquent-coherence>

25 *Ibid.*

26 For example, this issue was put on the agenda of the G7 under the leadership of Canada in 2018. Civil society is pushing their governments to adopt a feminist foreign policy, as is the case with the International Center for Research on Women in collaboration with organisations such as Care, Oxfam, Action Aid, Plan International in the United States. Source: Coralie Vos, "Des politiques étrangères 'féministes' qui manquent parfois de cohérence", Centre national de coopération au développement, 1er March 2021, <https://www.cncd.be/des-politiques-etrangees-etrangees-feministes-manquent-coherence>

27 Comparative Analysis, "Policy brief: Comparative Analysis of Feminist Foreign Policies", International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), 2020, <https://iwda.org.au/resource/policy-brief-comparative-analysis-of-feminist-foreign-policies/>

28 Coralie Vos, "Des politiques étrangères 'féministes' qui manquent parfois de cohérence", Centre national de coopération au développement, 1er March 2021, <https://www.cncd.be/des-politiques-etrangees-etrangees-feministes-manquent-coherence>

29 *Ibid.*

30 *Ibid.*

action traditionally associated with women, family, sometimes the fight against domestic violence or aiming at equal pay. Nevertheless, there have been some good advances: in Chile, the new Constitution is based on parity<sup>31</sup>, in Argentina, abortion has been legalised<sup>32</sup>, in Lebanon, the law that exonerated a rapist if he married his victim has been repealed<sup>33</sup> and many African countries, such as Sudan<sup>34</sup>, have introduced new legislation banning female circumcision.

However, these advances remain insufficient, and progress is uneven across States. No country can claim to have eradicated gender-based violence or achieved gender equality. At the collective and institutional levels, the deconstruction of gender stereotypes is slow. Finally, States too often opt for corrective measures that do not address the systemic roots of inequality. In this sense, civil society demands to be heard in its plurality of voices, asks for more means from public authorities and demands a global vision, with guarantees for the implementation of feminist political programs.

The format of the GEF was revealed in Mexico City, and the commitments were presented in Paris. The Forum took place in two stages. The first was organized by the Mexican government (in reference to the first conference in 1975<sup>35</sup>). This first event, attended by 10,000 people, presented the action plans of the global acceleration plan for gender

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31 France 24 with AFP, "Chile : une Indienne mapuche élue présidente de l'Assemblée constituante", 4 July 2021, <https://www.france24.com/fr/am%C3%A9riques/20210704-chili-une-assembly%C3%A9e-h%C3%A9t%C3%A9rog%C3%A8ne-se-met-au-travail-pour-%C3%A9laborer-une-nouvelle-constitution>

32 France 24 with AFP, "L'Argentine autorise officiellement l'IVG, le Chili ouvre à son tour le débat", 15 January 2021, <https://www.france24.com/fr/am%C3%A9riques/20210115-l-argentine-autorise-officiellement-l-ivg-le-chili-ouvre-%C3%A0-son-tour-le-d%C3%A9bat>

33 UN Women, "Repeal of Rape Law by Lebanese Parliament Marks Historic Day for Women in Country," 18 August 2017, <https://www.unwomen.org/fr/news/stories/2017/8/news-lebanon-parliament-repeals-rape-law>

34 Le Piver Léah, "Mutilations génitales-féminines : victoire au Soudan et état des lieux dune-", GSI Consulting, 7 May 2020, <http://www.gsi-consulting.fr/2020/05/07/mutilations-genitales-feminines-victoire-au-soudan-et-etat-des-lieux-dune-protection-complexe/>

35 Nicolas Yveline, "Forum Génération Égalité", Adéquations, July 2021, <http://www.adequations.org/spip.php?rubrique433>

equality. The plan is structured around six coalitions of action, composed of different actors committed to creating partnerships between States, international organizations, CSOs, youth organizations, companies and philanthropic foundations from the private sector. More than 95 "champions" were selected to take on decision-making roles on five-year commitments (2021-2026). The outcome of the work within the action coalitions has highlighted 24 actions for scale-up, making up the "Global Gender Equality Acceleration Plan"<sup>36</sup>. Each action coalition is dedicated to a priority theme to advance women's rights and gender equality worldwide:

- Gender-based violence;
- Justice and economic rights;
- Freedom over one's Body and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights;
- Feminist Action for Climate Justice ;
- Technology and innovation for gender equality ;
- Feminist movements and leadership.

Finally, a follow-up mechanism for the "Women, Peace and Security" agenda, called the "Pact on Women, Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action" (WPS-HA) was presented to the GEF. Both victims of violence and combatants in armed forces, women are also actors of peace<sup>37</sup>, although they are often left out of negotiations<sup>38</sup>. Partnerships have been created between governments, civil society, the private sector and universities. In

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36 Focus 2030, "First stage of the Generation Equality Forum in Mexico: Conclusions and first commitments", News, 30 April 2021, <https://focus2030.org/Premiere-etape-du-Forum-Generation-Egalite-au-Mexique-conclusions-et-premiers>

37 French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, "2nd French National Action Plan - Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security", 2015-2018, [https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/femmes\\_paix\\_et\\_securite\\_final\\_cle81d4fl.pdf](https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/femmes_paix_et_securite_final_cle81d4fl.pdf)

38 UN Women, "Women, Peace and Security", <https://www.unwomen.org/fr/what-we-do/peace-and-security>

2000, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325<sup>39</sup> on Women, Peace and Security, which recognizes the disproportionate and specific impact of armed conflict on women<sup>40</sup> and aims to increase women's participation in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding<sup>41</sup>. Since then, nine other resolutions have been adopted on this subject. This body of law provides for the protection of women, the prevention of violence against women in armed conflict (in particular, sexual violence) and the participation of women in crisis resolution, stabilization and reconstruction mechanisms<sup>42</sup>. The WPS-HA Pact utilizes the UN normative framework and emphasizes the need to "catalyze accelerated progress [...], trigger global and local conversations across generations, stimulate public and private investment [and] deliver concrete results for girls and women in conflict and crisis contexts."<sup>43</sup> At the conclusion of the GEF, it was signed by 154 actors.<sup>44</sup>

In preparation for the second stage of the GEF, held in Paris from June 30 to July 2, 2021, via an online platform, all actors were called upon to become commitment bearers and to officially announce them during the event. During the summit, each one put forward one or more commitments of different nature (financial, programmatic, political, advocacy) and will be involved in both the implementation of the Acceleration Agenda for Gender Equality and its follow-up for the period 2021-2026.

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39 Resolution 1325 (2000) adopted on 31 October 2000 by the UN Security Council, [https://www.un.org/womenwatch/ods/S-RES-1325\(2000\)-F.pdf](https://www.un.org/womenwatch/ods/S-RES-1325(2000)-F.pdf)

40 National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) "Women, Peace and Security", <https://www.cncdh.fr/fr/dossiers-thematiques/femmes-paix-et-securite>

41 French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, "The Women, Peace and Security Agenda", <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/politique-etrangere-de-la-france/diplomatie-feministe/actualites-et-evenements/article/l-agenda-femmes-paix-et-securite>

42 *Ibid*

43 Forum Génération Égalité, "Pact on Women, Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action (FPS-AH)", to promote "women's funding, participation, security, leadership and action in the peace, security and humanitarian aid sectors, the protection of women in conflict and crisis contexts, including women human rights defenders", <https://forum.generationequality.org/fr/pacte-sur-les-femmes-la-paix-la-securite-et-laction-humanitaire-fps-ah>

44 WPS HA Compact, List of Compact signatories, <https://wpshcompact.org/current-compact-signatories/>

It is a 21-member Civil Society Advisory Group<sup>45</sup>, which conducted a selection process described as participatory and inclusive. Its purpose is to support decision-making by the Core Group, ensuring that the priorities of civil society are reflected in the outcomes of the Forum.

## B. An international feminist summit in a complex context

- In the light of the rise of conservatism and the obstacles within the United Nations: a necessary and original forum

In 2014, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, then French Minister for Women's Rights, denounced the "objective coalition of conservatives of all stripes and those countries [which] oppose any progress on women's rights."<sup>46</sup> The international conservatism<sup>47</sup> which has been at work for several years is challenging decades of gains for women's rights. Freedoms are receding, fundamental rights remain optional, such as the right to abortion. Within international institutions, and particularly within the UN framework, progress in the area of gender equality has come to a standstill.

If this hostility to discussing women's rights was previously perceived by some observers as criticism of a UN orientation deemed too "libe-

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45 GEF Platform, "The Civil Society Advisory Group to the Core Group", <https://forum.generationequality.org/fr/le-groupe-consultatif-de-la-societe-civile-aupres-du-groupe-central>

46 Barroux Rémi, "Offensive des pays-conservateurs sur les droits des femmes en Europe et dans le monde," Le Monde, March 8, 2014, [https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2014/03/08/offensive-des-pays-conservateurs-sur-les-droits-des-femmes-en-europe-et-dans-le-monde\\_4379864\\_3244.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2014/03/08/offensive-des-pays-conservateurs-sur-les-droits-des-femmes-en-europe-et-dans-le-monde_4379864_3244.html)

47 Speech by President Emmanuel Macron at the Opening Ceremony of the Forum, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVIPtqJkc\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVIPtqJkc_U)

ral"<sup>48</sup>, this tendency has only become stronger. While it was feared that rights would stagnate, today there has been a real regression on these issues. In international fora, notably within the United Nations' Committee on Women's Status<sup>49</sup>, groups of traditionalist states, the Vatican, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, and the United States, are blocking any progress in the rights of women and gender minorities. These refractory movements often have a religious imprint, be it Catholic, Evangelical, Mormon, Orthodox or Muslim<sup>50</sup>.

This conservative mobilization is also visible within the institutions of the European Union and is notably embodied by Hungary, Poland and Malta. These States invoke the necessary protection of the so-called traditional family against the drifts of individualism nowadays and deprive international treaties of their effectiveness, by opposing them with sovereignty clauses<sup>51</sup> and invoking national specificities. According to Nicolas Rainaud, co-head of international advocacy for Equipop, "in UN forums, the issue generating the most diplomatic tension is always that of sexual rights and reproductive health. Some countries don't want to hear about 'rights'"<sup>52</sup>. The same is true for several, particularly influential, civil society actors, such as the American Center for Family and Human Rights

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48 Barroux Rémi, "Offensive des pays-conservateurs sur les droits des femmes en Europe et dans le monde", *Le Monde*, 8 March 2014, [https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2014/03/08/offensive-des-pays-conservateurs-sur-les-droits-des-femmes-en-europe-et-dans-le-monde\\_4379864\\_3244.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2014/03/08/offensive-des-pays-conservateurs-sur-les-droits-des-femmes-en-europe-et-dans-le-monde_4379864_3244.html)

49 The UN Commission on the Status of Women is "the main global intergovernmental body dedicated exclusively to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Source: UN Women Commission on the Status of Women, <https://www.unwomen.org/fr/csw>

50 Vos Coralie, "Droits des femmes : Le retour de bâton et la résistance qui s'organise", Centre national de coopération au développement, 27 February 2021, <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.cncd.be/droits-des-femmes-retour-de-baton-resistance&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1631813360064000&usg=AOvYaw09OLT1hWdhtYj2fXGpC2AI>

51 A clause in a treaty by which a State limits the effect of or exempts itself from an international obligation.

52 Barroux Rémi, "Offensive des pays-conservateurs sur les droits des femmes en Europe et dans le monde," *Le Monde*, March 8, 2014, [https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2014/03/08/offensive-des-pays-conservateurs-sur-les-droits-des-femmes-en-europe-et-dans-le-monde\\_4379864\\_3244.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2014/03/08/offensive-des-pays-conservateurs-sur-les-droits-des-femmes-en-europe-et-dans-le-monde_4379864_3244.html)

(C-Fam), which is opposed to the right to abortion<sup>53</sup>.

Major stumbling block, this essential right to women's empowerment and freedom has been under attack from all sides since the health crisis. The examples are multiplying. This "backlash" against feminist advances can also be seen in so-called democratic countries, such as the United States, where Alabama, Arkansas, Iowa, Ohio, Oklahoma, Mississippi and Texas have deemed abortion to be "non-essential"<sup>54</sup> care. In Poland, "the ruling Law and Justice party is waging a gender war"<sup>55</sup> by banning abortion in cases of fetal malformation as of January 2021<sup>56</sup>. Furthermore, despite the rise in gender-based violence in this context, Turkey announced, in March 2021, its withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, an international treaty that sets binding standards to prevent acts of violence against women.

In an attempt to overcome these obstacles, the Forum proposes an original format, based on volunteerism and partnership, involving civil society, the private sector and philanthropic organizations, which thus seem to be placed almost on the same level as States. While remaining within the UN framework, this typology allows the Forum's actors to extricate themselves from the constraints of UN operations and reactionary forces that are reluctant to advance the feminist agenda.

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53 Borger Julian, Ford Liz, "Revealed: the fringe rightwing group changing the UN agenda on abortion rights," The Guardian, May 16, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/may/16/cfam-rightwing-white-house-anti-abortion-un>

54 Clavaud Amandine, Rouach Déborah, "Le droit à l'avortement : un combat sans fin pour garantir la liberté de disposer de son corps", Fondation Jean Jaurès, September 2021, <https://www.jean-jaures.org/publication/le-droit-a-lavortement-un-combat-sans-fin-pour-garantir-la-liberte-de-disposer-de-son-corps/>

55 Nowicka Wanda, "Forum Génération Égalité : sur le terrain, les contextes varient et les luttes féministes aussi," RFI, July 1, er 2021, <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/france/20210630-forum-g%C3%A9n%C3%A9ration-%C3%A9galit%C3%A9-sur-le-terrain-les-contextes-varient-et-les-luttes-f%C3%A9ministes-aussi>

56 Iwaniuk Jakub, "En Pologne, la quasi-interdiction de l'avortement entre en vigueur sur fond de manifestations", Le Monde, 31 January 2021, [https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2021/01/31/en-pologne-la-quasi-interdiction-de-l-avortement-est-entree-en-vigueur-sur-fond-de-manifestations\\_6068302\\_3210.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2021/01/31/en-pologne-la-quasi-interdiction-de-l-avortement-est-entree-en-vigueur-sur-fond-de-manifestations_6068302_3210.html)

It should be noted that the Forum had little visibility and impact in the media. While the Forum, a historic moment for feminist advances, was supposed to (re)mobilize the international community on gender equality, only 3% of the population in France, the Forum's host country, was aware of the GEF. "Ignoring the international meeting for women's rights at a time when women are paying the highest price for the crisis"<sup>57</sup>. It is regrettable that such a crucial issue of such magnitude - 50,000 people participated online and around 500 speakers were present - did not receive more media coverage. Despite the mobilization and communication work around the Forum before it was held (UN Women France had organized a festival of citizen engagement in Paris in 2020, entitled "Generation Equality Voices", aimed at civil society), the GEF missed the opportunity to create an impact on a scale comparable to that in Beijing. The health situation, which led to the postponement of the Forum for a year and monopolized the media, may partly explain this lack of interest.

France and Mexico took turns hosting the Forum. Their legitimacy as "champions of gender equality" must, however, be qualified. In France and Mexico, the phenomena of sexist and sexual violence denounced elsewhere persist: the number of feminicides remains high in both countries, around 3,800 in 2020 in Mexico<sup>58</sup>, 102 in France<sup>59</sup>, and feminist associations denounce the lack of financial support granted by public aid. Amnesty International revealed that the Mexican government authorities violently repressed several peaceful demonstrations organized by

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57 Oxfam, "In Paris, a UN summit for women's rights almost goes unnoticed", 6 July 2021, <https://www.oxfamfrance.org/communiqués-de-presse/tribune-a-paris-un-sommet-des-nations-unies-pour-les-droits-des-femmes-quasiment-passe-sous-silence/>

58 BBC News, "Feminicidios en México Arussi Unda, de Las Brujas del Mar: "El machismo y la impunidad hacen la mezcla perfecta en donde se odia a las mujeres y no pasa nada," February 3, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-55885880>

59 Le Monde with AFP, "Féminicides : 102 femmes tuées en 2020 selon un nouveau rapport, des mesures annoncées", 1er August 2021, [https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2021/08/01/feminicides-102-femmes-tuees-en-2020-selon-un-nouveau-rapport-des-mesures-annoncees\\_6090247\\_3224.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2021/08/01/feminicides-102-femmes-tuees-en-2020-selon-un-nouveau-rapport-des-mesures-annoncees_6090247_3224.html)

feminists against gender-based violence in 2020<sup>60</sup>. A week before the summit, President Emmanuel Macron had still not received the feminist associations at the Elysée Palace<sup>61</sup>, and on the sidelines of the Forum, the press widely reported his statements against the extension of the legal deadline for abortion to 16 weeks<sup>62</sup>. The French President's position on intersectionality<sup>63</sup> also seems to contradict the ambitions of the GEF, which makes it one of its main characteristics. Let us also note that France did not have a feminist recovery plan despite the "feminine recession"<sup>64</sup> caused by the health crisis, while President Emmanuel Macron declared that he had made gender equality a priority of his five-year term<sup>65</sup>.

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60 Amnesty International, Press Release, "Mexico. Authorities used illegal force and sexual violence to silence women protesting against gender-based violence", 3 March 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/latest/press-release/2021/03/mexico-autoridades-usaron-violencia-sexual-para-silenciar-mujeres/>

61 Slate, "Emmanuel Macron, feminists around the world are watching you," June 23, 2021, <http://www.slate.fr/story/211169/tribune-emmanuel-macron-les-feministes-du-monde-entier-vous-regardent-egalites-lgbt>

62 Djamshidi Ava, Philipponnat Véronique, Werner Dorothee, "Exclusive Femicides, equality, first lady, crop top: Macron answers", Elle, July 1, er 2021, <https://www.elle.fr/Societe/News/Emmanuel-Macron-son-entretien-exclusif-avec-ELLE-3934484> - On extending the abortion deadline to 16 weeks: "I'm not in favour of it (...). You are right, I will never live it down. That does not prevent me from measuring it with much more respect than people who think that it is nothing to abort at 16 weeks. All the gynecologists say it, it's more traumatic at those times."

63 Djamshidi Ava, Philipponnat Véronique, Werner Dorothee, Elle, "Exclusive Femicides, equality, first lady, crop top: Macron responds," July 1, er 2021, <https://www.elle.fr/Societe/News/Emmanuel-Macron-son-entretien-exclusif-avec-ELLE-3934484> - "I don't recognize myself in this fight that refers to one's identity or particularism (...). I see society gradually becoming racialized (...). Now, the intersectional logic fractures everything."

64 Jouan Hélène, Le Monde, "Covid-19: Canada advocates a 'feminist' recovery plan", June 6, 2021, [https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2021/06/06/covid-9-le-canada-prone-un-plan-de-relance-feministe\\_6083096\\_3244.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2021/06/06/covid-9-le-canada-prone-un-plan-de-relance-feministe_6083096_3244.html)

65 Oxfam "At the Generation Equality Forum, France misses its appointment with gender equality", 7 July 2021, <https://www.oxfamfrance.org/inegalites-femmes-hommes/au-forum-generation-egalite-la-france-rate-son-rendez-vous-pour-legalite-femmes-hommes/>

- An encounter of intersectionality, intergenerationality and inclusion?

The GEF was presented as an intersectional and inclusive event, attentive to cross-discrimination, i.e., the accumulation of discrimination suffered by a person based on gender, class, race, sexual orientation, etc., and which gives a direct voice to the people who suffer from it. The active participation of young people in the organization and running of the GEF was desired. Intersectional, inclusive and intergenerational: the GEF aims to demonstrate a democratic approach, ensuring continuity and coherence of gender policies.

Despite this commitment, women with disabilities, LGBTI+ and Aboriginal women were poorly represented at the summit. In fact, the speaking time of these speakers was often less. As the GEF focused mainly on women's rights and inclusion, some issues were not addressed during the discussions. We can only regret this partial omission, as these subjects are often complementary. In addition, there were several technical, administrative and financial problems, which were denounced during the GEF but also afterwards, during meetings of the feminist civil society<sup>66</sup>. These obstacles to participation in the Forum were manifested both online and in person (difficulties in obtaining visas to travel to France or in contacting embassies, an online platform that often failed<sup>67</sup>). These problems were identified as symptomatic of the digital divide which prevented people from geographical areas with low levels of digitalization from following the Summit and expressing their opinions and feelings.

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66 Informal feminist debriefing on the GEF, organized by Outright, AWID, CREA, 26 July 2021

67 On several occasions, participants pointed out the malfunctioning of the chat and theal-located identifiers, of the commitment platform, some of them were never able to access to online events or received technical assistance, etc.

## C. The health context: an "anti-feminist" virus

According to the World Economic Forum's Annual Report 2021, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused "an entire generation to be lost in achieving equality"<sup>68</sup>, calling into question "30 years of progress on gender equality"<sup>69</sup>, according to Delphine O, Secretary General of the Generation Equality Forum. It would now take 135.6 years to close the gender gap in the world, compared to 99.5 years in 2020<sup>70</sup>.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has only worsened the situation of women throughout the world, in terms of economic insecurity, unemployment, lack of access to health care, and above all domestic violence. Indeed, about gender-based violence, the measures enacted by governments to curb the number of COVID-19, such as containment, have particularly led to an increase in domestic violence and feminicides. The World Health Organization has reported an alarming increase of over 60% in domestic violence calls in EU countries in 2020 compared to 2019<sup>71</sup>. This is due to the need to stay at home longer and the difficulty or impossibility of going to shelters to get away from their abuser, or to report the violence suffered at police stations<sup>72</sup>.

Moreover, figures from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) compiled during the health crisis starkly highlight socio-economic gender inequalities. At the time of the pandemic,

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68 World Economic Forum, "Gender Equality Falls Back a Generation Due to Pandemic, New Study Finds," March 31, 2021, <https://fr.weforum.org/press/2021/03/l-egalite-femmes-hommes-recule-dune-generation-a-cause-de-la-pandemie-selon-une-nouvelle-etude/>

69 Delphine O, Secretary General of the Forum Génération Égalité, speaking to Frédéric Rivière for RFI on 30 June 2021

70 Focus 2030, "Census of databases on gender inequalities in the world", Facts and Figures, 31 May 2021, <https://focus2030.org/Recensement-des-bases-de-donnees-sur-les-inegalites-de-genre-dans-le-monde>

71 World Health Organization Europe, "Statement - During COVID-19 pandemic, violence remains preventable, not inevitable," May 2020, <https://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/regional-director/statements-and-speeches/2020/statement-during-covid-19-pandemic,-violence-remains-preventable,-not-inevitable>

72 *Ibid.*

70% of front-line professions were staffed by women (85% in nursing and obstetrics) in at least 104 countries<sup>73</sup>. The majority presence of women in the care professions is related to their absence in leadership positions in other professional categories, and in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields<sup>74</sup>. In addition, there is the "invisible" work done by women in the private sphere, including housework and childcare (on average two hours more per day than men, according to the OECD<sup>75</sup>). Women's private sphere has also been impacted by confidence-building measures that have led to an increase in parental and domestic responsibilities, roles that are still often gendered within families<sup>76</sup>.

Finally, the economic losses resulting from the health crisis have also had gendered effects: some categories of women workers have been forced to stop working (especially women workers on fixed-term contracts, temporary contracts, student jobs, undeclared activities), while many of them have no social protection.<sup>77</sup>

According to OXFAM, women's income losses represent at least \$800 billion in 2020, more than the combined GDPs of 98 countries<sup>78</sup>. 47 million women fell below the extreme poverty line in the same year, and they will represent most of the poor until 2023, according to UN forecasts. The pandemic has also set back the feminist agenda for young girls, who have been forced to drop out of school or will not be able to return. UNESCO estimates that more than 11 million girls may not return to school after

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73 OECD Report "Women at the core of the fight against Covid-19 crisis", 2020, [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=127\\_127000-awfnqj80me&title=Women-at-the-core-of-the-fight-against-COVID-19-crisis](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=127_127000-awfnqj80me&title=Women-at-the-core-of-the-fight-against-COVID-19-crisis)

74 *Ibid.*

75 *Ibid.*

76 *Ibid.*

77 Women's Foundation, "The Impact of Covid-19 on Women's Employment," March 2021, [https://fondationdesfemmes.org/dfd-content/uploads/2021/06/rapport-ffd-2021\\_impact-du-covid-sur-lemploi-des-femmes.pdf](https://fondationdesfemmes.org/dfd-content/uploads/2021/06/rapport-ffd-2021_impact-du-covid-sur-lemploi-des-femmes.pdf)

78 Oxfam "Covid-19: Women's income loss in 2020 equals the combined wealth of 98 countries," April 29, 2021, <https://www.oxfamfrance.org/communiqués-de-presse/covid-19-la-perte-de-revenus-des-femmes-en-2020-equivaut-a-la-richesse-combinée-de-98-pays/>

the Covid-19 crisis<sup>79</sup>. Only massive and ambitious measures to reduce the number of girls in school will be needed. Only massive and ambitious measures can reduce women's poverty and their present or future loss of autonomy. However, only one in eight States<sup>80</sup> has taken measures to address the economic and social impact of the crisis on women and girls. This is the case in Canada, which is incorporating women's and girls' rights as a priority in its June 2021 economic stimulus plan.<sup>81</sup>

Women are particularly vulnerable to crises. In order to overcome gender inequalities, women's rights organizations around the world are urging governments to ensure an international feminist revival, with a strong political will and adequate funding.

Regarding the consequences of the health context on the GEF, its programming and orientation were adapted. The event was postponed for a year and Covid-19 was at the heart of the debate. This health context acted as a catalyst, highlighting observations made for a long time by the associations. The pandemic, unprecedented in recent history, should be an opportunity for institutions to impose a feminist agenda. A major difficulty remains, which consists in changing mentalities, in pushing back sexist thinking, qualified as an "invisible barrier"<sup>82</sup>. It is a question of "uprooting" preconceived ideas and pushing back injunctions at the individual level, removing barriers and overturning patterns of discrimination.

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79 UNESCO, "More than 11 million girls may not return to school after Covid-19 crisis," <https://fr.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/girlseducation#:~:text=11%20millions.,caus%C3%A9e%20par%20la%20COVID%2D19.&text=Pour%20de%20nombreuses%20filles%2C%20,est%20une%20bou%C3%A9%20de%20sauvetage>.

80 UN Women, News, "Covid-19: Only one in eight countries worldwide has put in place measures to mitigate the economic and social impact of the crisis on women and girls, according to new data," 28 September 2021, <https://www.unwomen.org/fr/news/stories/2020/9/press-release-launch-of-covid-19-global-gender-response-tracker>

81 Jouan Hélène, "Covid-19 : le Canada prône un plan de relance 'féministe'", Le Monde, 6 juin 2021, [https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2021/06/06/covid-9-le-canada-prone-un-plan-de-relance-feministe\\_6083096\\_3244.html#:~:text=Depuis%20le%20d%C3%A9but%20de%20la,faire%20des%20femmes%20une%20priorit%C3%A9](https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2021/06/06/covid-9-le-canada-prone-un-plan-de-relance-feministe_6083096_3244.html#:~:text=Depuis%20le%20d%C3%A9but%20de%20la,faire%20des%20femmes%20une%20priorit%C3%A9)

82 United Nations Development program, 'Nearly 90% of the world's men/women are prejudiced against women', 5 March 2020, [https://www1.undp.org/content/undp/fr/home/news-centre/news/2020/Gender\\_Social\\_Norms\\_Index\\_2020.html](https://www1.undp.org/content/undp/fr/home/news-centre/news/2020/Gender_Social_Norms_Index_2020.html)

## Part II: What kind of commitments to transform women's lives?

"Stop talking, start funding"<sup>83</sup>, the slogan of the global campaign to fight against gender-based and sexual violence, was hammered home during the Forum by young people and civil society, who are demanding a major and unprecedented financial commitment from governmental and private sector actors. The reason: twenty-six years after the Beijing summit, the underfunding of the ambitions set out in 1995 is often cited as one of the reasons for the failure, at least in part, of the implementation of the program. This "chronic lack of investment...has hindered the advancement of women's rights and gender equality"<sup>84</sup>. An OECD report<sup>85</sup> shows that, in OECD Development Assistance Committee countries, women's rights organizations receive only 0.1% of total official development assistance and only 0.4% of all gender-related aid. Furthermore, groups working on intersecting forms of discrimination (LGBTI+, indigenous women, young feminists and sex workers) receive even less funding<sup>86</sup>. Funding and development assistance plans are therefore at the forefront of this gender equality approach, as the UN already outlined in 2015<sup>87</sup>.

The purpose of the GEF is to bring together "those who can put

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83 In French "Assez parlé, finacez! Official campaign website: <https://www.stoptalkings-tartfunding.org/>

84 UN Women, "The Importance of Financing for Women and Girls", <https://www.unwomen.org/fr/news/in-focus/financing-for-gender-equality>

85 OECD Dac Network On Gender Equality (Gendernet), "Aid Focussed on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A snapshot of current funding and trends over time in support of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action", 2020, <https://www.oecd.org/development/gender-development/Aid-Focussed-on-Gender-Equality-and-Women-s-Empowerment-2020.pdf>

86 *Ibid.*

87 UN Women, "The Importance of Financing for Women and Girls", <https://www.unwomen.org/fr/news/in-focus/financing-for-gender-equality>

money on on the table"<sup>88</sup>, according to the terms of Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women<sup>89</sup>, to increase funding for gender equality development. In general, the commitments address the following topics: training, education and facilitation of knowledge transfer (through networks and platforms), employment, health, culture, sport and research. Some commitments are purely financial, through the support provided by a stakeholder to a partner organization to achieve the objectives on its agenda. Sometimes this involves the promotion of a tool, a platform, a petition or an international convention. The private sector, on the other hand, exposed its important investment power because "when it comes to gender equality, women want results rather than words".<sup>90</sup>

Who will benefit from this funding? "To the women and girls of the world, to address the issues identified as most critical in their impact on women, presented to governments and other partners"<sup>91</sup>, said Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. The Forum organizers hope that the 1,000 or so people who have confirmed their commitment so far will be joined by many more over the next five years.

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88 AP, "UN Women hopes to promote gender equality, see more female leaders in 5 years with \$40bn," The Economic Times, August 20, 2021, [https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/un-women-hopes-to-promote-gender-equality-see-more-female-leaders-in-5-years-with-40-bn/articleshow/85483373.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/un-women-hopes-to-promote-gender-equality-see-more-female-leaders-in-5-years-with-40-bn/articleshow/85483373.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

89 Opening speech of the Generation Equality Forum, Speech by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Paris, July 2021, <https://generationequalityforum-paris2021.fr/en>

90 Melinda Gates at the opening ceremony of the Forum, "On gender equality, women need results over rhetoric", [https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/06/30/melinda-gates-en-matiere-d-egalite-des-sexes-les-femmes-veulent-des-resultats-plutot-que-des-discours\\_6086391\\_3232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/06/30/melinda-gates-en-matiere-d-egalite-des-sexes-les-femmes-veulent-des-resultats-plutot-que-des-discours_6086391_3232.html)

91 AP, "UN Women hopes to promote gender equality, see more female leaders in 5 years with \$40bn," The Economic Times, August 20, 2021, [https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/un-women-hopes-to-promote-gender-equality-see-more-female-leaders-in-5-years-with-40-bn/articleshow/85483373.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/un-women-hopes-to-promote-gender-equality-see-more-female-leaders-in-5-years-with-40-bn/articleshow/85483373.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

## A. Responding to systemic mechanisms, \$40 billion to support women's rights: a strong commitment with uncertain effects

Which continent, state, or actor has proposed the most ambitious investments and in what area? Are the governments with the largest gross domestic products (GDP) the biggest contributors to the GEF? Was there a major shift in funding for women's and girls' rights at the Forum? Through a comparative approach and a non-exhaustive study of the commitments presented, we were able to observe their great diversity in terms of formulation, amount and objectives to be achieved. These commitments fall into one or more of the following categories: programmatic, advocacy, political or financial. In addition, the organizers of the Generation Equality Forum called for commitments that were transformative, measurable and ideally designed with other stakeholders. They should reflect the principles of action coalitions: feminist and intersectional leadership and transformation.

The total contributions are estimated at \$40 billion at the close of the Forum. It should be noted that there is a margin of error in the calculation of total and regional commitments.

- Protecting women's lives: combating gender-based violence (GBV)

"One is not born a woman, but one dies of it"<sup>92</sup>. Gender-based violence (GBV) happens every day. Women are victims of GBV, regardless of their country, social background, professional field or education level. In private as well as in the public sphere, women suffered violence, aggression or harassment, and denounce an indifferent power system, as well as a justice incapable of preventing them and punishing the perpetrators. The

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92 Feminist collage in protest and in memory of the victims of a double femicide lesbophobic event that took place in August 2021

real extent of the phenomenon is difficult to estimate, as only less than 40% of women file complaints or seek help, the others being worried about the repercussions or assuming that there is no point in doing so. The true extent of the phenomenon is difficult to estimate, as only less than 40 per cent of women file complaints or seek help, the rest being worried about the repercussions or assuming that there is no point in doing so. According to the UN, nearly one in three women worldwide is a victim of violence<sup>93</sup>. During the coronavirus pandemic, calls to help lines increased drastically in some countries (+25% in Argentina, + 30% in France, 33% in Singapore)<sup>94</sup>.

This violence is multiple and GBV is not only physical. A study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) estimates that 82% of women parliamentarians interviewed, from five different regions of the world, have already been subjected to psychological intimidation during their mandate<sup>95</sup>. In the European Union, one in 10 women said they had experienced cyberbullying at least once in their lives, from the age of 15<sup>96</sup>.

These data show the prevalence of GBV, but also its banality. Rape culture minimizes and normalizes violent acts and puts the victim on trial, not the perpetrator, who often goes unpunished. It is too often assumed that violence is inflicted on women in public spaces, by strangers, and that it involves physical injury or weapons. However, researcher Noémie Renard has shown that three quarters of rapes are committed by a family member, a spouse or an ex-spouse; 11% would be perpe-

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93 United Nations, "One in three women worldwide is a victim of physical or sexual violence", <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2021/03/1091282>

94 UN Women, "Covid-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls," <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls>

95 Inter-Parliamentary Union, a world organization of parliaments of sovereign states, v"Saewx-issumrv, ehya-arta-sas-mgleanctea-oncdt1v4i\_oelenn.pcddef against women parliamentarians," Thematic Bulletin, October 2016, <http://archive.ipu.org/pdf/publications/issues-brief-f.pdf>

96 97European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, "Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-vaw-survey-at-a-glance-oct14\\_fr.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-vaw-survey-at-a-glance-oct14_fr.pdf)

## ■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

trated at gunpoint, 10% of victims suffer physical injuries.<sup>97</sup>

Given the persistence of GBV and its exacerbation during the Covid-19 pandemic, the first action coalition of the GEF was dedicated to this issue. Overall, the 415 commitments formulated for this coalition are based on several strategies:

- **Introduce/promote evidence-based laws and action plans to end GBV.** This is the case in Kenya, which has announced a \$2.8 million national plan to strengthen existing legislation on GBV and to eradicate social and cultural norms propagating GBV, including forced marriage and female genital mutilation. CSOs reiterated the importance of ratifying existing international conventions to eliminate this scourge.
- **Develop quality prevention policies and services for survivors of GBV in both the private and public sectors and increase funding for autonomous organizations led by girls and women who are fighting against GBV.** CSOs have advocated for education and awareness-raising on GBV for young people and especially men, as well as for safe workplaces free from all forms of violence and harassment. Iceland, in collaboration with UN Women, will implement a comprehensive project to counteract harmful gender stereotypes, targeted at men and boys. Topics will include consent, sexual and gender-based violence, harmful masculinity, Internet violence, etc. The Ford Foundation will provide \$260 million to women's rights organizations to create adequate infrastructure. Germany will provide a range of support services for survivors (health care, legal support), especially in conflict areas.

The analysis of the commitments shows that the focus of The coalition seems to be sexual and physical violence, to the detriment of other typologies (verbal, economic, psychological), which are also deeply rooted in our societies, but more subtle and therefore sometimes more diffi-

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<sup>97</sup> Renard Noémie, *En finir avec la culture du viol*, Les Petits Matins, 2018

cult to combat. Moreover, some participants of the Forum regretted the lack of attention paid to refugee and/or displaced women and girls, or the tendency to consider women as a homogeneous group, while some are more exposed to GBV than others (e.g. racialized women, women working in the human services sector). The needs of transgender people have not been specifically addressed, nor the violence they directly experience, such as forced conversion therapies.

Finally, many of the commitments lack innovation, contrary to what was requested by civil society. One example is Belgium, which aims to strengthen its normative framework through a national plan against GBV and the integration of gender mainstreaming in all its public policies. However, several of these actions were already planned: a national action plan against GBV was announced in December 2020, and a law integrating the gender dimension in public policies has existed since 2007<sup>98</sup>.

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98 Le soir, "La Belgique, à petits pas contre la violence de genre", June 2021, <https://www.lesoir.be/381590/article/2021-06-30/la-belgique-petits-pas-contre-la-violence-de-genre>

■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

## Stakeholders involved in the coalition on GBV and their financial commitments

### Actors

**Governments:** Iceland, Kenya, United Kingdom, Paraguay

**International organizations:** Commission European

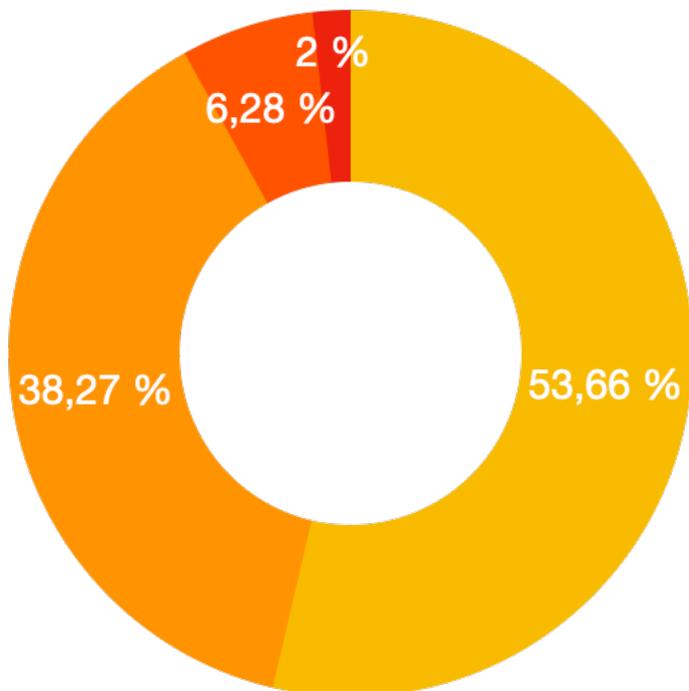
**UN Agencies:** UN Women, WHO

**Civil society organizations:** Breakthrough, Outright, Abaad, European Women's Lobby, Safe cities and safe public spaces

**Philanthropic organizations:** Ford Foundation

**Youth-led organizations:** Las ninas lideran, Youth advocacy through partnerships and networks

### Number and amounts of commitments by continent, regardless of actors



- Europe (158): \$ 6 533 724 779
- Americas (122): \$ 4 659 443 979
- Africa (149): \$ 764 836 418
- Asia (27): \$ 217 289 594
- Middle-East (2): \$ 152

**Total amount: \$12,175,294,922**

## ■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

- Strengthening sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)

"The SRHRs bring together under the same heading a set of different but complementary concepts. It is a question of linking a health approach to a freedom approach through access to a certain number of rights. The SRHR therefore include sexual health respectively reproductive health, sexual rights, and reproductive rights."<sup>99</sup> Sexual and reproductive health and rights, despite their central importance to women's lives, were almost left off the GEF agenda because they were considered too divisive. This fear of jeopardizing the entire Forum was mainly due to the opposition of the Trump administration, which was in power during the preparation of the Forum<sup>100</sup>. To do without the support of the United States would have been a particularly complex diplomatic manoeuvre. This was without counting on the mobilization of civil society to demand that France include this theme. France finally declared itself the "Champion" of this coalition of action, risking renewed UN opposition within the Forum, but siding with the interests of women.

Early definitions considered these rights in the strict sense of contraception, maternity and the prevention of disease and sexually transmitted infections. However, recent conceptions of SRHR are intended to take a positive approach to these rights, namely "sexual and reproductive health including a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being, in all matters relating to sexuality and reproduction, and not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity"<sup>101</sup>. It is this positive approach to SRHR that was retained and promoted in the

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99 Clavaud A., Clavière J., Rouach D., Minet A., Gorge S., Padis M.-O., "Pour la liberté de disposer. Promouvoir et garantir l'accès aux droits et à la santé sexuels et reproductifs des femmes en Afrique subsaharienne", Fondation Jean-Jaurès, Terra Nova, June 2021, <https://www.jean-jaures.org/publication/pour-la-liberte-de-disposer-de-son-corps/>

100 The Biden administration was instituted last January 2021

101 Lancet - Guttmacher Commission on DSSR, "Accelerate progress-sexual and reproductive health and rights for all: report of the Guttmacher-Lancet Commission," May 9, 2018, <https://www.thelancet.com/commissions/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights>

discussions, and which recognizes the role played by sexual relationships as sources of pleasure, the importance of promoting confidence and communication in the area of SRHR to enable women and girls to develop greater self-esteem and overall well-being.

The financing of SRHR is crucial for the achievement of gender equality, as these are fundamental rights allowing women to freely dispose of their bodies and to emancipate themselves from restrictive social logics<sup>102</sup>. A concrete example is that of unwanted pregnancies, and their increase following the Covid-19 pandemic. A UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) report published last March notes that in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic prevented women and girls from having access to contraception, which led to nearly 1.4 million unwanted pregnancies worldwide<sup>103</sup>.

The commitments formulated in the SRHR coalition address the following four main actions:

- **Expand comprehensive sexuality education** and remove legal and policy barriers preventing pregnant adolescents and teenage mothers from staying in or returning to school<sup>104</sup>. One example is Germany, which focuses its commitments on girls and women autonomy to achieve SRHR, culminating in access to comprehensive sexuality education and funding for family planning that prioritizes maternal health. In this effort, Germany is partnering with the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) to the tune of 15 million euros and with UNFPA with a contribution of

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102 Focus 2030, "Gender, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: What Place in Official Development Assistance?", May 2021, [https://focus2030.org/IMG/pdf/note\\_analyse\\_n5\\_genre\\_dssr\\_focus\\_2030.pdf](https://focus2030.org/IMG/pdf/note_analyse_n5_genre_dssr_focus_2030.pdf)

103 UNFPA, Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending Gender-based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage, April 2020, <https://www.unfpa.org/fr/node/24179>

104 Generation Equality Forum, "Handbook of Action Coalitions," June 28, 2021, [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/609d99c149adb21f3531ff37/t/60db448913054d0fa1c5782e/1624982667677/CA\\_Manuel%2Bdes%2Bengagements+-+updated+28+June.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/609d99c149adb21f3531ff37/t/60db448913054d0fa1c5782e/1624982667677/CA_Manuel%2Bdes%2Bengagements+-+updated+28+June.pdf)

## ■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

40 million euros.

- **Increase the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of comprehensive abortion and contraceptive services.** Promote the implementation of innovative collaborations between civil society, private and public sector health services and philanthropic organizations to design and provide virtual platforms for access to free SRHR information and counseling for adolescents<sup>105</sup>. Finland's commitment is \$25 million over five years between 2021 and 2026, and will be used in Finland's development cooperation through partnerships for sexuality education with civil society.<sup>106</sup> Or Switzerland, which is also committing with Co-Impact, a global philanthropic organization working in the South, to dedicate \$500 million over the next five years to support "local, mainly women-led organizations and initiatives in the South to bring about large-scale sustainable systems change".<sup>107</sup>
- **Increase decision-making on SRHR and bodily autonomy.** Encourage the creation of a network of women-led organizations, feminist advocates, and young women leaders to ensure dialogue with religious leaders in the community (mostly men), who then make public commitments and speak out in favor of transforming gender norms to promote bodily freedom and SRHR of girls and women.<sup>108</sup>
- **Strengthen girls', women's and feminist organizations and networks to promote and protect bodily autonomy and SRHR.** This action, in synergy with the Coalition for Action on

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105 *Ibid.* 104

106 Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, "What is Feminist Foreign Policy?", <https://centrefor-feministforeignpolicy.org/feminist-foreign-policy>

107 Commitment Map, GEF, <https://forumgenerationegalite.fr/page-map>

108 Generation Equality Forum, "Handbook of Action Coalitions," June 28, 2021, [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/609d99c149adb21f3531ff37/t/60db448913054d-0fa1c5782e/1624982667677/CA\\_Manuel%2Bdes%2Bengagements+-+updated+28+June.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/609d99c149adb21f3531ff37/t/60db448913054d-0fa1c5782e/1624982667677/CA_Manuel%2Bdes%2Bengagements+-+updated+28+June.pdf)

Feminist Movements and Leadership, aims to expand civic space, remove barriers to feminist action, and strengthen youth-serving and youth-led movements and organizations by 2026<sup>109</sup>. The Forum also discussed cross-generational partnerships to bring youth voices to the panels, including the panel entitled My Body is My Own<sup>110</sup> with activists involved in movements for the right to body determination. Attention was also given to marginalized women, particularly those with disabilities, whose specific needs arising from the intersection of disability and SRHR should not be overlooked.

The financial commitments to SRHR have come mainly from northern countries, particularly in Europe. Finland, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland are among the governments that have pledged funding for SRHR. German funding is provided under cooperation agreements, and is therefore intended to be allocated abroad, but the commitments do not always specify to which state. One financial commitment that stands out among the coalition comes from Belgium, which pledges to support Europe and Central Asia with a contribution of \$42.8 million, including \$36 million dedicated to UNFPA resources to ensure stable, flexible and predictable resources for the implementation of its Strategic Plan for the period 2021-2024. Belgium will also fund the UN children's rights agency, UNICEF, with \$71.4 million. The period covered and the purpose of the sum allocated are not specified, but the sums promised are significant.

It was observed that there was an effort to include women with different social realities (young people, disabled, indigenous, refugees, among others) in the discussion panels, but it remains to be seen whether their demands will be taken into account to allow the adaptation of the commitments of this coalition to their specific realities and needs.

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109 *Ibid.*108

110 Generation Equality Forum, "Panel: My Body is My Own," July 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nF5pujy\\_rTl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nF5pujy_rTl)

## The actors involved in the DSSR coalition and their financial commitments

### Actors

**Governments:** Argentina, Burkina Faso, Denmark, France, Northern Macedonia

**International organizations:** Global financing facility, World bank group

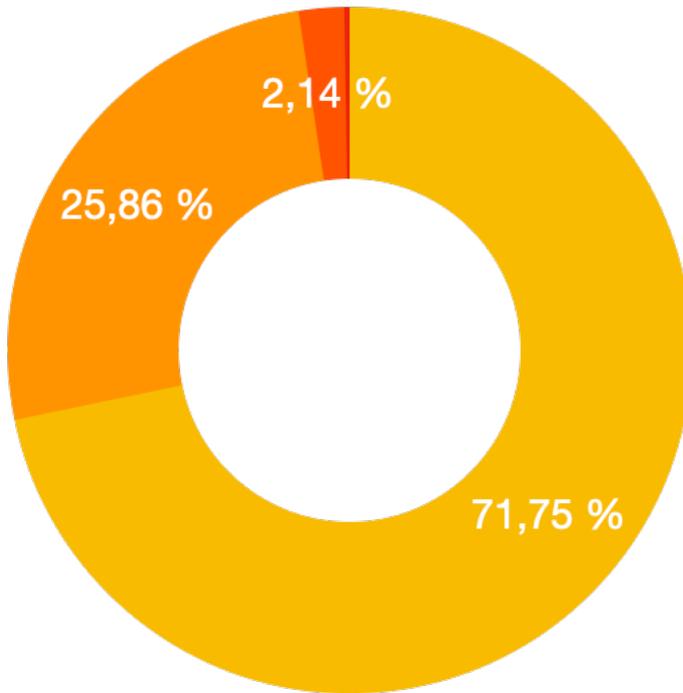
**UN Agencies:** United Nations populations fund (UNFPA)

**Civil society organizations:** Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women, (Arrow), Rights and Health Alliance, Fundacion para estudio e investigacion de la mujer, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), International Women's health coalition

**Philanthropic organizations:** Children's investment fund foundation

**Youth-led organizations:** Youth coalition, El Enlace Continental de Mujeres Indígenas de las Américas (ECMIA)

### Number and amounts of commitments by continent, regardless of actors



- Americas (79): \$ 4 745 209 645
- Europe (59): \$ 1 710 136 385
- Africa (54): \$ 141 849 301
- Asia (21): \$ 16 089 966
- Oceania (2): 0\$

Total amount: \$6,613,285,297

## ■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

- Consolidating the place of women in socio-economic life

The Covid-19 pandemic threatens our economic systems. The measures put in place by governments to curb infection have had obvious gendered consequences from a socio-economic perspective: women are among the categories most affected by the health crisis, given the horizontal segregation of the labour market which sees them over-represented in part-time jobs, as well as in the care professions, both outdoors (in hospitals, for example) and indoors (domestic tasks, parental responsibilities, etc.)<sup>111</sup>. "Women have been the most affected by this crisis, because they started from further back than men," explains Sandy Torrès, sociologist at the Observatoire québécois des inégalités<sup>112</sup>. Simone de Beauvoir's formula, which stated that all it takes is a crisis to call women's rights into question, has shown its full relevance in the context of the pandemic.

However, although the health crisis has aggravated economic gender inequalities, it should be stressed that the socio-economic situation of women was already worrying before: unequal distribution of domestic and parental work (women spend 3 times more time on it than men, according to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs<sup>113</sup>), gaps between women and men in labour market participation (26% on average, according to the OIL<sup>114</sup>), difficulty in reconciling private and

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111 United Nations, "The Impact of Covid-19 on Women," April 2020, [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/note\\_de\\_synthese\\_-\\_limpact\\_de\\_la\\_covid-19\\_sur\\_les\\_femmes\\_et\\_les\\_filles.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/note_de_synthese_-_limpact_de_la_covid-19_sur_les_femmes_et_les_filles.pdf)

112 Jouan Hélène, "Covid-19 : le Canada prône un plan de relance 'féministe'", Le Monde, 6 June 2021, [https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2021/06/06/covid-9-le-canada-prone-un-plan-de-relance-feministe\\_6083096\\_3244.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2021/06/06/covid-9-le-canada-prone-un-plan-de-relance-feministe_6083096_3244.html)

113 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Time spent in unpaid work; total work burden; and work-life balance," last updated March 8, 2021, <https://worlds-women-2020-data-undesa.hub.arcgis.com/apps/6f02cbbfb8d34cb7806d21f4bd14e826/explore>

114 International Labour Organization, "Fewer women than men will regain employment during the Covid-19 recovery," July 19, 2021, [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/news-room/news/WCMS\\_813449/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/news-room/news/WCMS_813449/lang--en/index.htm)

professional life, under-representation of women in entrepreneurship or even in STEM careers, low financial inclusion...

740 million women worldwide work in the informal economy, exposed to social insecurity and precarious working conditions<sup>115</sup>. Women are also more likely to fall into extreme poverty, to be out of school and thus out of the labor force.

Within the framework of the GEF, these findings led to the creation of a Coalition for Action on Economic Justice and Rights. A total of 273 commitments were announced. Overall, they are organized around four components:

- **Ensuring women's access to resources, especially land, services, especially financial services, and business and trade.** For example, P&G's will spend \$10 million on women's entrepreneurship, in partnership with UN Women and CSOs such as WEConnect International and the Women's Business Enterprise National Council. PayPal has committed \$100 million to democratize financial services and increase access to micro-loans for women entrepreneurs. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will invest \$650 million in programs focused on women's empowerment. Also of great importance is the "Stand for her land" involves Germany, the World Bank, etc., and aims to secure access to land for more than 10 million women in 10 countries by 2031. It aims to guarantee access to land for more than 10 million women in 10 countries by 2031.
- **Promote a non-discriminatory labor market and a care economy valuing domestic work and encouraging a more equitable division of labor.** Mexico, with the support of UN Women, has launched the Global Care Alliance, which includes 39 countries, as well as numerous civil society organizations (ECDAN,

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<sup>115</sup> International Labour Organization, "Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture," 2018, [https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_626831/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_626831/lang-en/index.htm)

## ■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

Women Deliever) and philanthropic organizations (Ford Foundation). This initiative advocates the recognition, reduction and redistribution of domestic and care tasks through public policies to reconcile private and professional life, awareness campaigns on the sharing of responsibilities, new care infrastructures, etc.

- **Invest in economic systems that are more resilient to external shocks, including through recovery plans incorporating a gender perspective.** This is the case in Canada, but also in Spain, where the reintegration of women into the labour market is central to their post-pandemic recovery plans.
- **Ensuring decent work, both in the formal and informal economy.** To this end, CSOs have advocated for mechanisms to collect gender-related data. For example, Data2X, supported by PayPal, will create a microsite to present and monitor gender data and house it in one place for better coordination and multi-stakeholder and cross-sector partnerships. There are many calls for ratification of the ILO Convention No. 190, concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, and calls for a faster transition from informal to formal work.

Overall, we can highlight the presence of several multi-stakeholder engagements, as recommended by civil society (the Global Care Alliance, or the Stand for Her Land campaign). Similarly, there are many attempts to develop action plans involving several coalitions of action (on GBV, or empowerment and leadership).

However, the transformative nature of some of the commitments requested by civil society is quite limited: financial inclusion plans, for example, or support for women's entrepreneurship, are part of a neoliberal economic logic. However, according to several CSOs, including many youth organisations, the neoliberal socio-economic model has shown its lack of resilience in times of crisis, the effects of which weigh heavily on women. However, these commitments seem to be oriented towards regulating this system, rather than reflecting on how to overco-

me it. While the involvement of many States in the coalition on justice and economic rights is to be welcomed, at the same time, the States that made commitments were often countries that were involved in gender issues well before the GEF, such as Sweden. It is therefore regrettable that other states did not seize the opportunity to formulate a strong commitment on socio-economic issues, despite the numerous calls from civil society to make the cause of women a priority in the post- pandemic economic recovery.

### Actors involved in the Justice Coalition and Economic Rights and their financial commitments

#### Actors

**Governments :** Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Spain, Sweden

**International organizations:** OECD, UNCDF

**Civil society organizations:** The African women's development and communication network, Huariou Commission, CARE, WWG FFD, ITU CSI IGB

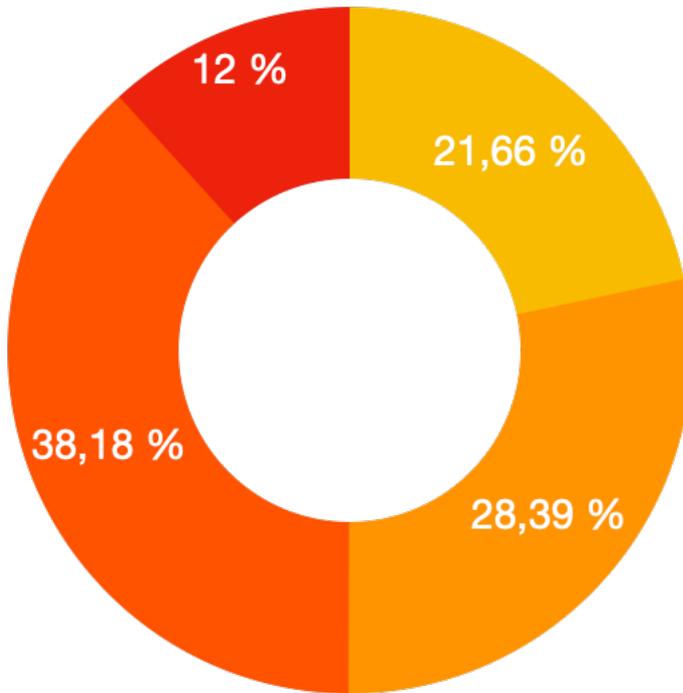
**Philanthropic organizations:** Fondation Gates

**Youth-led organizations:** ANYAR, Manki Marqua

**Private Sector:** PayPal

■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

### Number and amounts of commitments by continent, regardless of actors



- Europe (84): \$ 3 534 672
- Americas (95): \$ 4 631 964
- Africa (77): \$ 6 230 400
- Asia (16): \$ 1 920 057
- Oceania (1): \$ 0

Total amount: \$16,317,093

- Protecting women from environmental crises and strengthening their role in climate action

The link between climate justice and gender equality was absent from the discussions in Beijing in 1995. Since then, the environmental issue has become a pervasive concern around the world. It was therefore imperative to integrate it into the work of the GEF, especially since women and girls are "affected in a very significant way by climate change"<sup>116</sup>, especially those from developing countries<sup>117</sup>. There are many reasons why women are vulnerable<sup>118</sup> to environmental crises, including their overrepresentation in the poorest populations and their increased dependence on natural resources<sup>119</sup>. The Feminist Action for Climate Justice Coalition (FACJC) has recognized the inextricable link between health, economics, gender equality and environmental protection. Women are more affected by climate-related disasters and food insecurity<sup>120</sup> while they have limited access to natural resources and international<sup>121</sup> envi-

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116 Harris Kamala, speaking at the 65th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, March 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAR5CiFGCy4&t=7141s&ab\\_channel=Reuters](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAR5CiFGCy4&t=7141s&ab_channel=Reuters)

117 Robinson Mary for Harvey Fiona, "Women in developing countries are among the most vulnerable to climate change," The Guardian, December 8, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/08/cop21-is-too-male-dominated-and-has-male-priorities-says-un-special-envoy>

118 Higher workloads, higher mortality than men. Source: Verona Collantes, UN Women Intergovernmental Specialist, for Global Citizen, <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/how-climate-change-affects-women/>

119 Osman-Elasha Balgis, UN Chronicle, "Women...In The Shadow of Climate Change", <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/women-in-shadow-climate-change>

120 For example, in 2019 "after Cyclone Idai in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe, nearly 75,000 pregnant women had no access to clean water, sanitation or reproductive health care; they were threatened with sexual assault." Source: André Urevig, "When it comes to addressing climate change, gender matters," *Ensis*, September 11, 2019, <https://ensia.com/notable/gender-climate-change/>

121 At the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations, they accounted for "40% of all national party delegates and about 30% of heads of delegation in 2018, on average [...] 35% in Africa and the Asia-Pacific region", Gender Climate Tracker, "Women's participation statistics in climate diplomacy", Introduction, <https://www.genderclimatetracker.org/node/193>

## ■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

ronmental decision- making. Despite a resolution on gender equality in the context of climate change<sup>122</sup>, Mary Robinson denounced the lack of women at COP21: "When it's a male world, You have male priorities"<sup>123</sup>. Their involvement in agriculture is considerable, yet women own less than 15% of the world's land<sup>124</sup>. They represent less than one third of the total number of students enrolled in courses including the green jobs<sup>125</sup> approach. Only 3% of philanthropic funding for the environment supports women's and girls' environmental activism<sup>126</sup>. Women environmental activists, particularly indigenous women<sup>127</sup>, are victims of violence, ranging from intimidation to murder<sup>128</sup>. Pregnant women are also at risk of environmental<sup>129</sup> violence. Women are not, however, "simply powerless victims"<sup>130</sup>, their participation and leadership "can have transformative effects in their countries and communities"<sup>131</sup>. The 113 commitments made in the FACJ coalition aim to address the following issues by 2026. They are based on the following strategies:

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122 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Subsidiary Body for Implementation, Forty-first Session, Lima, 1er - 8 December 2014, Agenda Item 16: Gender equality in the context of climate change, <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/docs/2014/sbi/fre/l43rev01f.pdf>

123 Harvey Fiona, "Cop21 is too male dominated and has male priorities, says UN Special Envoy", The Guardian, December 8, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/08/cop21-is-too-male-dominated-and-has-male-priorities-says-un-special-envoy>

124 Generation Equality Forum, "Women's Climate Justice Action Coalition", [https://forum.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/FACJ\\_FR.pdf](https://forum.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/FACJ_FR.pdf)

125 *Ibid.*

126 *Ibid.*

127 Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah, Lejla Medanhodzic, Liz Ford, "Remembering women killed fighting for Human rights in 2017", The Guardian, November 29, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/nov/29/remembering-women-killed-fighting-for-human-rights-in-2017>

128 Jamison Ervin, "In defense of nature: women at the forefront," UNDP, 27 November 2018, <https://www.undp.org/blog/defense-nature-women-forefront>

129 *Ibid.*

130 Collantes Verona, UN Women Intergovernmental Specialist for Global Citizen, <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/how-climate-change-affects-women/>

131 *Ibid.*

## ■ Gender at the summit: understanding the issues at stake at the GEF

- **The transition to an inclusive<sup>132</sup>, circular and regenerative green economy, recognizing the interdependence of climate change and justice issues, protecting and amplifying the voices of local communities and their advocates.** The OSC Creators 2030 UN SDGs Arts & Youth Initiative is committing \$1 million to implement advocacy and provide funding by developing projects for local organizations employing and are led by women and support employment and entrepreneurship for youth in green economies.
- **Equitable and meaningful participation of women and girls in decision-making at all levels.** The French CSO Femmes Santé Climat (FSC) is contributing \$16,000 through an advocacy commitment to "maximize the representation and impact of women and youth in decision-making."<sup>133</sup>
- **Financial institutions and donors to take gender risks into account, with women's organizations as priority partners. Accountability of funders to support resilient communities and to invest in gender-sensitive and ecosystem-based climate approaches.** The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized UN agency, has pledged \$500 million by 2024, promising to "offer its knowledge, funding and partnership to support local and global action for gender-responsive climate change"<sup>134</sup>. In addition, IFAD has committed that "35% of its new projects will be 'gender transformative'"<sup>135</sup>. Natural Environment Technology In Africa (FEMNET Africa), a

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132 Defined by the UN Environment program: "An inclusive green economy is one that improves human well-being and builds social equity while reducing environmental risks and scarcities. It is an alternative to today's dominant economic model, which exacerbates inequalities [...], triggers resource shortages and generates widespread threats to the environment and human health. Over the past decade, the concept of a green economy has become a strategic priority for many governments." <https://www.unep.org/fr/node/19231>

133 Map of GEF commitments, <https://forumgenerationegalite.fr/page-map>

134 *Ibid.*

135 *Ibid.*

## ■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

Kenyan international organization and UN development system, specializes in natural resource economics and works in 50 African countries. It is investing \$10 million to influence macroeconomic policies and climate change frameworks. To do this, it will develop the African Feminist Macroeconomic Academy (AFMA) to engage young women, female policy leaders and non-binary people in Africa. AFMA will generate an intergenerational pool of feminist analytical advocates to develop an equitable, sustainable and feminist alternative economic model. FEMNET supports innovative girls, local movements and collectives and partners with women's media associations to advocate for SRHR and the ratification and implementation of ILO Convention 190.

- **Equitable access to climate finance, technology and knowledge, control over natural resources for management and protection, ensuring human rights and access to land.** The Africa Programmatic Engagement of ODJ Girls for Climate Action, a Ugandan civil society organization, is funded with \$140,000. It includes local training programs for women and girls on leadership, climate advocacy and policy at over 100 local community centers, where women and girls can create local solutions to their local climate challenges and green jobs to contribute to this agenda<sup>136</sup>. The organization aims to train more than 1,000 women and girls and expand its activities to the East African region by 2026.
- **Increase the percentage of global public and private climate finance flows invested in gender-equitable climate solutions, particularly at the local and rural level.** Funding must be based on a gender-sensitive approach. This bilateral and multilateral funding must increase by 65%.
- **Gender-sensitive programs should build on community cooperative models, guarantee land rights, and security**

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136 Map of GEF commitments, <https://forumgenerationegalite.fr/page-map>

of tenure<sup>137</sup>. The National Institute of Women of Costa Rica (INAMU Costa Rica) aims to have a national action plan on climate change and gender equality by 2022 to improve women's access to funding for environmental projects and to promote gender-sensitive education and "effective leadership of women and girls as risk managers in their communities"<sup>138</sup>. Unfortunately, this commitment is not funded. The Democratic Republic of Congo's Actions Pour La Conservation De La Nature Et Le Développement Communautaire (ACNDC) is committing \$5 million for advocacy on women's decision-making and the promotion of government investment in natural resources management, at all levels of decentralization, using various tools: agricultural calendar, environmental impact assessments, land use and management diagnosis, etc., to ensure better resource management.

- **19 countries are expected to demonstrate increased use of gender and environment statistics.** With the support of the French Embassy in Chile and in collaboration with the Eurosocial + program, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is investing \$150,000 in the coalition. Through the publication of a roadmap of actions to be implemented in seven priority areas: regulatory framework, knowledge generation, data and statistics, capacity-building, representation and equal participation, financing, implementation and accountability, ECLAC will identify promising practices in synergy with the coalition's axes.

Exchanges were made possible between environmental activists

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137 The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, responsible for monitoring the implementation of the 1976 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, affirms that "regardless of the tenure regime, every person has the right to a degree of security that guarantees legal protection against eviction, harassment or other threats", UN Women, "Promoting secure tenure for women", 27 February 2011, <https://www.endvawnow.org/fr/articles/770-promouvoir-la-scurit-doccupation-foncire-pour-les-femmes.html>

138 Map of GEF commitments, <https://forumgenerationegalite.fr/page-map>

## ■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

and financial partners such as the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, BNP Paribas, Greengrants and the Green Climate Fund<sup>139</sup>. While some reluctance on the part of environmental activists is understandable, it is "essential to talk to the banks"<sup>140</sup> in order to advance gender equality. The FACJ coalition was supported by civil society, particularly in Africa and South America (58 commitments out of 113). The only private sector company to have committed to the action coalition is the American company Mary Kay Inc., up to \$30,000, bearing the only two financial type commitment. The French, Swiss, Kenyan and American philanthropies have been quietly supportive compared to the other coalitions. Governmental actors were particularly absent: only Ecuador, Nigeria, the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK were present. They presented interesting projects, but unfortunately did not fund their commitments. The FACJ coalition made it possible to bring together actors in the green transition without managing to mobilize the necessary funding to overcome the obstacles identified.

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139 Discussion on "Women's Action for Climate Justice", FGE, with Grethel Aguilar, Carlos Alvarado Quesada, Inger Andersen, Joanita Babirye, Kehkashan Basu, Anita Bhatia, Bridget Burns, David Choquenhuanca, Angie Dazé, Olga Djanaeva, Patricia Espinosa, Gilbert F. Houngbo, Mithika Mwenda, Noelene Nabulivou, Naomi Nyamweya, No-hora Quiguntar, Odile Renaud-Basso, Jan Beagle, Suzanne Biegel, Julie Cissé, Laura Cook, Abdul Ghafoor Mohammed, Yannick Glemarec, Jeannette Gurung, Anne Heloise, Raquel La-gunas, Regan Pritzker, Maria Reyes, Mary Robinson, 2 July 2021

140 Interview with Nicolas Rainaud, Equipop's international advocacy manager and member of the High Council for Equality conducted on October 28, 2021.

## The actors involved in the FACJ coalition and their financial commitments

### Actors

**Governments :** Costa Rica, Maldives

**International organizations:** IUCN, OCDE

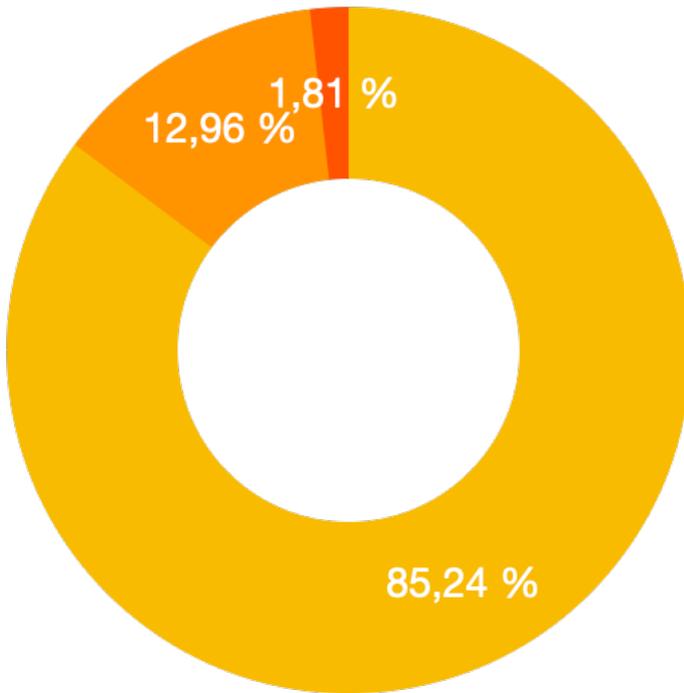
**UN agencies:** UNDP, UN Environment, UN Framework convention on climate change, LIFAD

**Civil society organizations:** Girls for climate, Green hope, Tejiendo

**Philanthropic organizations:** Global greengrants fund

■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

Number and amounts of commitments by continent, regardless of actors



- Europe (39): \$ 1 011 416 000
- Americas (41): \$ 153 725 000
- Africa (29): \$ 21 431 200
- Asia (3): \$ 1 350
- Australia (1): \$ 0

Total amount: \$1,186,573,550

- Supporting women in technology and innovation

The term "information and communication technology" (ICT) includes modern knowledge sharing and communication tools used in the digital age, such as the Internet, computers, etc. It is a fact that innovation and technology do not benefit women and men equally. This gender gap hinders efforts to achieve gender equality and prevents women from becoming both developers and consumers of the technologies meeting their needs. Globally, women are 21% less likely than men<sup>141</sup> to own a cell phone. Women are underrepresented in the workforce, accounting for only 30% of employees and 18% of managers.<sup>142</sup>

According to Hamadoun Touré, Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union, ICTs facilitate access to education and training for girls and women and improve their access to health services and their participation in the economy and in civil society, which is why they are essential<sup>143</sup>. It is also undeniable that a more active involvement of women throughout the life cycle of technological and other innovations will lead to greater development outcomes and women's empowerment. Technological innovations give women a voice and break their geographic, social, economic and political isolation. Excluded from the technology sector, women may not be able to change their status<sup>144</sup>. It is therefore essential to rethink access to the Internet for women and girls, who are still the first victims of digital exclusion.

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141 Women's WorldWide Web (W4), "New Technologies: Indispensable Tools for Networking and Empowerment of Girls and Women", <https://www.w4.org/fr/nouvelles-technologies-pour-emancipation-des-femmes/>

142 Lambert Chloé, "Forum Génération Égalité : Les technologies et l'innovation au service de l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes", 50-50 Magazine, 6 July 2021, <https://www.50-50magazine.fr/2021/07/06/forum-generation-egalite-les-technologies-et-linnovation-au-service-de-legalite-entre-les-femmes-et-les-hommes/>

143 UN Women, "Generation Equality 50%," <https://www.onufemmes.fr/nos-actualites/2021/6/24/generation-egalite-56>

144 Touré Hamadoun, Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union, <https://www.50-50magazine.fr/2021/07/06/forum-generation-egalite-les-technologies-et-linnovation-au-service-de-legalite-entre-les-femmes-et-les-hommes/>

## ■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

Within the Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality coalition, 186 commitments have been announced, contributing to four main actions:

- **Close the gender gap in digital access and skills** by investing in the creation of safe, gender-responsive and well-equipped learning environments for girls and women to access and develop digital technology. It is imperative to eliminate stereotypes and discriminatory practices against women limiting women's and girls' development of skills and learning of new technologies and their use of digital devices<sup>145</sup>. The French CSO Women's World-Wide Web (W4) is committing \$3 million, in partnership with EQUALS, ITU, GSMA and Ernst & Young, to provide one million women and girls with access to free, gender-sensitive IT training by 2026 through the "Her Digital Skills" program. The Spanish Government's e-Duc Fund is committing \$4,800,000 to bridge the digital divide in education in Spanish cooperation partner countries. Finland will allocate 80 million euros over the next five years to activities at the intersection of technology and innovation and gender equality in its development cooperation. These actions will be enabled by multiple partnerships, with UN Global Pulse Finland, the Unicef Innovation Fund and UNOPS Sustainable Investments in Infrastructure and Innovation (S3I).
- **Invest in feminist technology and innovation** to amplify opportunities identifying affordable, accessible, usable and sustainable technologies and provide equitable opportunities for all women and girls. In the United States, the Vijay Computer Academy is committing \$150,000 to empowering girls and women through digital skills and information technology training to bridge the

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<sup>145</sup> Generation Equality Forum "Handbook of Action Coalitions," June 28, 2021, [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/609d99c149adb21f3531ff37/t/60db448913054d-0fa1c5782e/1624982667677/CA\\_Manuel%2Bdes%2Bengagements+-+updated+28+June.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/609d99c149adb21f3531ff37/t/60db448913054d-0fa1c5782e/1624982667677/CA_Manuel%2Bdes%2Bengagements+-+updated+28+June.pdf)

digital divide at the local level.<sup>146</sup>

- **Create inclusive innovation ecosystems** to integrate and invest in targeted support for women innovators and entrepreneurs to help them develop and scale their businesses. This will provide girls and women with access to role models and mentors to break down stereotypes and transform the culture of innovation<sup>147</sup>. Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden have formed the Digital for Development (D4D) team. Together, these countries have launched the D4D Hub initiative, a strategic multi-stakeholder platform aiming to strengthen digital partnerships and stimulate joint investments between the European Union and countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Eastern neighbourhood. The D4D Hub will thus help to bridge the digital divide between the genders.<sup>148</sup>
- **Preventing and eliminating gender-based violence and online discrimination by strengthening the legal framework.** The Nigerian association "De Doronos-Jay Limited" is committing \$20 million to raise awareness and prevent actions leading to online gender-based violence. Another unfunded commitment is presented by the Ministry of High-Tech Industry of Armenia, which calls on all states to learn from the Covid-19 crisis in terms of access to technology. Armenia would like to offer flexible training, facilitating qualification and professional retraining and guaranteeing the economic independence of women. The representatives of Armenia expressed their readiness to create an appropriate legal framework and invest financially in this area.

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146 Generation Equality Forum «Handbook of Action Coalitions,» June 28, 2021, [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/609d99c149adb21f3531ff37/t/60db448913054d0fa1c5782e/1624982667677/CA\\_Manuel%2Bdes%2Bengagements+-+updated+28+June.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/609d99c149adb21f3531ff37/t/60db448913054d0fa1c5782e/1624982667677/CA_Manuel%2Bdes%2Bengagements+-+updated+28+June.pdf)

147 *Ibid.*

148 *Ibid.*

## ■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

Finally, there is the CSO #ShePersisted Global, which has developed a transnational US initiative to combat gendered misinformation and online attacks on women in politics.

There is still strong discrimination against some women in remote geographical areas with little or no internet connection. This dimension was highlighted during the debates. However, it is regrettable that certain issues were not addressed, such as the high cost of connectivity, which results in a lack of access to technologies, technical knowledge, autonomy and adequate infrastructures preventing many women from taking full advantage of digital and mobile technologies and the Internet.

Also, little attention has been paid to women's freedom of expression: even though the Internet has generally given them a voice, many women cannot express themselves freely because of the political and/or religious orientations of their country, as in Myanmar or Belarus. Promoting gender equality also means considering these socio-political considerations that can limit and constrain some people in the expression of their fundamental rights and freedoms. Nor have people with reduced mobility been targeted by actions that could help them directly in order to consider their situation and ensure full use of the new technologies.

There is a silence criticism regarding the online discrimination faced by the LGBTI+ community. Finland is one of the few states to have made a commitment to this, aiming to reach 85% of all new ODA funded programs to ensure the promotion of the use of innovation and technology to address gender inequalities.

## Actors involved in the technology and innovation coalition and their financial commitments

### Actors

**Governments :** Armenia, Chile, Finland, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, Tunisia

**UN agencies:** UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF

**Civil society organizations:** A+ Alliance, Global Fund For Women, Social Builder,

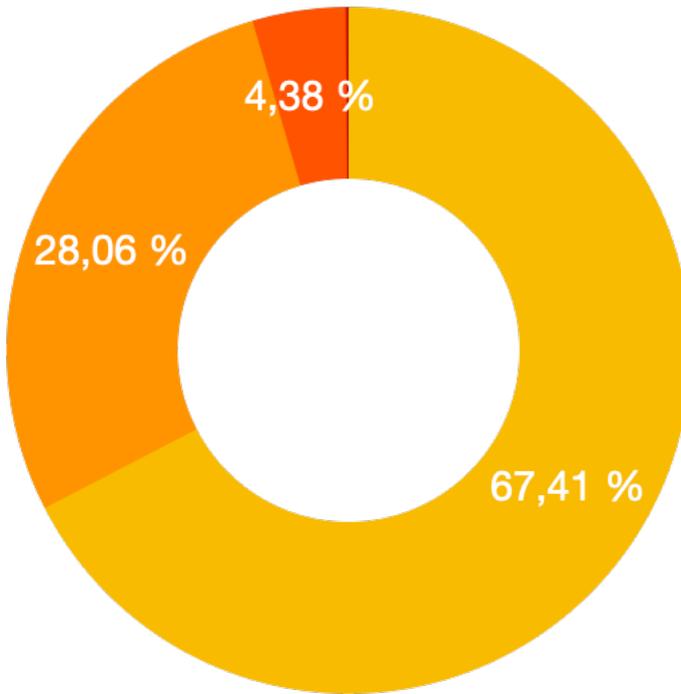
**Youth-led organization:** Digital Grassroots

**Companies:** Microsoft, Salesforce, Social Builder

**Philanthropic organizations:** Fondation Rockefeller

■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

Number and amounts of commitments by continent, regardless of actors



- Europe (78): \$ 713 770 000
  - Americas (62): \$ 297 077 346
  - Africa (46): \$ 46 379 215
  - Asia (5): \$ 611 350
  - Middle-East (1): \$ 1 000 000
- Total amount: \$1,058,837,911

- Sustaining the leadership of women and women's organizations

"One quarter is not equality"<sup>149</sup>. In her speech, UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-NGcuka denounced the fact that "everywhere in the world, women are confined to a small space"<sup>150</sup>. She noted that women make up a quarter of all managers, parliamentarians, climate change negotiators and "less than a quarter of those who negotiate peace agreements".<sup>151</sup>

This criticism is ancient, since in her 1791 Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Citizen, Olympe de Gouges declared:<sup>152</sup>"The full and effective participation of women in society is a condition for gender equality. The full and effective participation of women in society is a condition for gender equality. However, this equality is not achieved in many areas and sectors where women remain under-represented. In the decision-making bodies of States, only 22 countries will have a woman head of State or government by 2021<sup>153</sup>. In the same year, in only 13 countries were 50% or more of ministerial positions held by women<sup>154</sup>. The majority of ministerial portfolios held by women are concentrated in three areas: the environment, social affairs and those related to the family, children and youth, and care for the elderly and disabled<sup>155</sup>. At the global level, women represent only 25.5% of the membership of parliaments<sup>156</sup>. The private sector is not spared this phenomenon, as only 18%

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149 UN Info, "At the Generation Equality Forum in Paris, the UN pleads for a redistribution of power", 30 June 2021, <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2021/06/1099372>

150 *Ibid.*

151 *Ibid.*

152 Morin-Rotureau Évelyne ed, *Combats de femmes 1789-1799. La Révolution excludes women citizens. Autrement*, 2003, pp. 223-226.

153 Inter-Parliamentary Union, Map "Women in Politics: 2021", 2021, <https://www.ipu.org/fr/femmes-politique-2021>

154 *Ibid.*

155 *Ibid.*

156 *Ibid.*

## ■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

of companies worldwide are headed by women<sup>157</sup>. Moreover, about one in eight companies admit having an all-male Board of Directors<sup>158</sup>. As a result, funding from international organizations and governments directly dedicated to feminist civil society organizations remains underfunded. For example, the OECD's estimated \$24 billion global bilateral aid budget for gender equality and women's empowerment includes only less than \$500 million in direct funding to feminist civil society organizations in 2012<sup>159</sup>.

The Generation Equality Forum has therefore dedicated one of its action coalitions to the theme of "Feminist movements and leadership for gender equality". In this context, feminist movements refer to all initiatives emanating from civil society or other actors promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Regarding the notion of so-called "feminist" or "women's" leadership does not meet with consensus and raises questions. On the one hand, it is a question of praising the merits of women leaders who have managed the health crisis better, for example. But this vision of leadership is once again a stereotypical way of looking at women, which is limited to certain predefined qualities. As researcher Sarah Saint-Michel explains, "leadership has no gender"<sup>160</sup>. Thus, through this coalition, the Equality Generation Forum intends to provide leaders, movements and feminist organizations in all their diversity with the resources and support necessary to become sustainable in order to advance gender equality, peace and human rights

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157 World Economic Forum, "Global Gender Gap Report 2020", 2020, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality>

158 International Labour Organization, Report "Women in Business and Management: the business case for change," 2019, [https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_700953/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_700953/lang--en/index.htm)

159 OECD, Report "From Ambition to Results: Implementing Gender Equality Commitments in Donor Country Institutions", 2012, [https://www.oecd.org/fr/cad/femmes-developpement/FRE\\_From\\_ambition\\_to\\_results.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/fr/cad/femmes-developpement/FRE_From_ambition_to_results.pdf)

160 Saint-Michel, Sarah, "Gender and leadership. The importance of introducing the personality traits of leaders", International Journal of Psychosociology, vol.VXI, no. 40, 2010, pp. 181-201, [https://www.cairn.info/article.php?ID\\_ARTICLE=RIPS\\_040\\_0181&contenu=resume](https://www.cairn.info/article.php?ID_ARTICLE=RIPS_040_0181&contenu=resume)

by 2026. Its stated objectives are based on four central axes:

- **To fund and support feminist activists, organizations, funds and movements in all their diversity.** In Canada, the government is committed to maintaining its historical funding for women's organizations, particularly those from minority groups: Aboriginal women, women with disabilities and the LGBTI+ community. This funding commitment amounts to \$528,600,000. Canadian civil society seems equally invested in the issue as the Equality Fund is pledging \$90 million in support of women's movements over a five-year period.
- **Promote, expand and protect civic space in the context of action and mobilization processes initiated by feminist organizations.** In order to make this civic space healthier, some states such as Serbia are looking at gender responsive governance including awareness raising campaigns and grants to feminist civil society organizations up to \$500,000. Some civil society organizations are not hesitating to make significant funding pledges, such as the Indian organization Milaan Be The Change, which intends to create spaces for mobilizing feminist leaders and youth to the tune of \$1.5 million.
- **To strengthen and promote the participation, leadership and decision-making power of women, girls and non-binary people in all their diversity.** This reinforcement allowing a full and effective participation of all mobilized the different actors and in particular youth organizations. The Canadian organization Futureshot Factory has pledged \$29,000 to build the capacity of girls in the fields of mathematics, science and engineering, where women are underrepresented. Less consensual issues were addressed by civil society, notably those of sex workers, for which the Kiambu Sex Workers Association, a Kenyan organization, is committing \$200,000. Spain announced the establishment of the "elles + Fund" for women's leadership and participation in public life with a budget of 1.2 million dollars.

## ■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

- **Build the capacity of adolescent girls and young feminist leaders, their movements and organizations.** Several international organizations such as Plan International have joined the coalition as well as states such as Ireland partnering with Plan International and Purposeful to launch a \$900,000 "Girls Fund".

In total, the Coalition for Action on Women's Movements and Leadership has committed \$2.9 million<sup>161</sup>, with considerable investments from governments such as Canada, Spain, Nigeria and Ireland. In addition to the absence of Middle Eastern and North African countries and the weak commitment of Asian countries, it is important to note the surprising absence of commitment on the part of the Rwandan government, which has distinguished itself as a model of women's leadership, particularly within the political sector and specifically within its parliament, which has the highest percentage of women (61.3%)<sup>162</sup>.

The philanthropic sector is also fully committed to women's leadership and support for women's organizations, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation with a 100 millions commitment, in addition to a commitment of the same amount from one of the coalition's philanthropic champions, the Open Society Foundation.

Several other significant commitments have been made by NGOs, such as those of Plan International, which has set up several specific funds, and the financing agreement between Care France and the AFD, which promises 2.8 million euros for women's movements in Africa<sup>163</sup>. However, the fact remains that many of the commitments made within this coalition of action remain uncostered.

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161 Calculated from the funding commitments announced by the players on the Forum's commitment map, <https://forumgenerationegalite.fr/page-map>

162 Inter-Parliamentary Union, Map "Women in Politics: 2021", 2021, <https://www.ipu.org/fr/femmes-politique-2021>

163 Agence française de développement, "AFD and Care France commit to gender equality with a project to strengthen women's movements and women's leadership in Africa", June 2021, <https://www.afd.fr/fr/actualites/communiquede-presse/afd-et-care-france-egalite-femmes-hommes-mouvements-feministes-et-leadership-femmes-afrique>

## The actors involved in the leadership coalition and their financial commitments

### Actors

**Governments :** Canada, Malawi, Netherlands

**International organizations:** Inter- Parliamentary Union (IPU), United Cities and Local governments (UCLG), Women Political Leaders

**UN Agencies:** UN Human rights

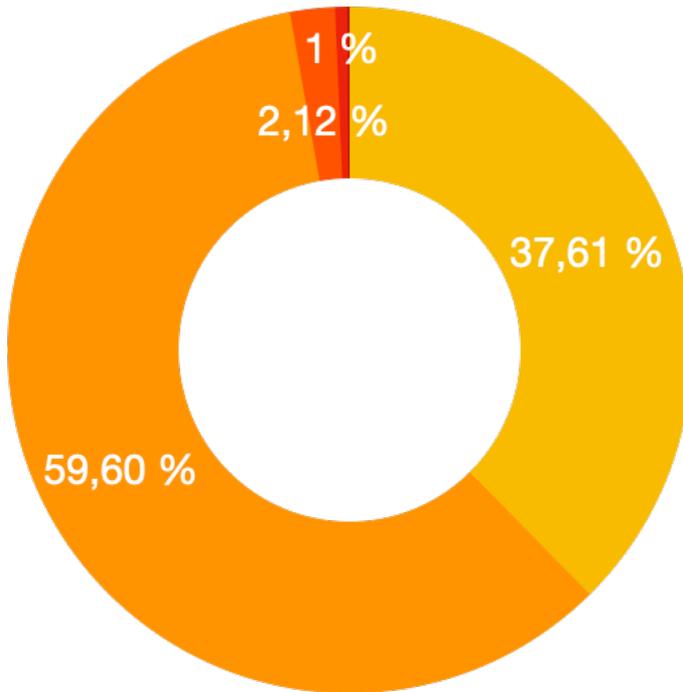
**Youth-led organizations:** Young Feminists Europe

**Philanthropic organizations:** Open Society Foundations

**Private Sector:** Gucci

■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

### Number and amounts of commitments by continent, regardless of actors



- Europe (29): \$ 1 104 072 541
- Americas (38): \$ 1 749 461 141
- Africa (47): \$ 62 170 480
- Oceania: \$ 16 932 000
- Asia (11): \$ 2 935 350

Total amount: \$2 935 571 512

## B. Resounding presences and conspicuous absences: the limits of a multi-stakeholder forum

- States and civil society: divergent involvement in the GEF

Within the Generation Equality Forum, states, as traditional actors of diplomacy and multilateralism, have turned to civil society. In general, states rely heavily on civil society's expertise and technical knowledge in the development and implementation of public policies, including gender-related policies<sup>164</sup>. Although interactions between civil society and government are frequent, the interests of these actors often remain divergent. CSOs, for example, criticize states fighting for gender equality for not raising their voices sufficiently towards countries that are resistant to feminist demands. At the same time, States are often reluctant to adopt sanctions against State actors who violate women's rights, in the name of international, commercial, financial stability, etc. Civil society also denounces the absence, or even the prohibition, by some States such as Hungary or Romania, of teaching on gender identity, sexual orientation and feminist theories.

In addition, civil society organizations must address the shortcomings of states in gender equality, as in other areas. Thanks to their presence on the ground and their associative dimension, CSOs can identify women's needs more quickly, aid in the event of humanitarian crises, influence the international agenda through mobilization campaigns or media actions, etc. The visibility of civil society is more and more increasing, which calls into questions the centrality of the state in public Service, which thus become the stakeholders among many others. The diplomatic game has been turned upside down: at the GEF, States can no longer limit themselves to consulting CSOs in order to implement decisions. The diplomatic

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164 Chambers Simone and Kopstein Jeffrey, "Civil Society and the State," Oxford Handbooks, 2009, <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199548439.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199548439-e-20>

## ■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

game has been turned upside down: at the GEF, States can no longer limit themselves to consulting CSOs in order to implement adopted decisions but must include them in upstream discussions.

Civil society demands a "regular"<sup>165</sup> dialogue with the institutions, beyond one-off meetings. All countries were invited to join this major event, provided they made strong commitments, but many of them, disinterested in the cause, abstained<sup>166</sup>. This lack of interest has serious consequences for the participation of States in the Forum: there were 189 in Beijing, compared to 68 at the GEF.<sup>167</sup>

A significant geographical imbalance results from the absence of certain States, despite a desire to show a collective collusion, certain regions of the world did not get involved<sup>168</sup>. China, Iraq, Turkey, Lithuania and Brazil were among those absent, represented only by their civil society, albeit weakly. Twenty countries and civil society from the American continent were present, from North, Central and South America, and they each presented commitments<sup>169</sup>. In Europe, most of the members countries of the European Union (20 out of 27) have answered<sup>170</sup>, but they were not the only ones to present commitments, as they were joined by other

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165 Collectif Générations Féministes, Press Release, July 2021, <https://generationsfeministes.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CP-Forum-Ge%CC%81ne%CC%81ration-E%CC%81galite%CC%81-.pdf>

166 Le soir, "Le Forum sur les droits des femmes exige du concret", June 2020, <https://plus.lesoir.be/381592/article/2021-06-30/le-forum-sur-les-droits-des-femmes-exige-du-concret>

167 *Ibid.*

168 Bing Parcon of the NGO Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR) at the July 26, 2021 informal feminist debriefing hosted by Outright, CREA and AWID.

169 The countries concerned are : Canada, United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Panama, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Martinique, Colombia, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela, Saint Lucia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Brazil, Peru, Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile.

170 The European Union countries not concerned are Hungary, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia and Latvia.

countries from the European continent<sup>171</sup>. Africa was also widely represented at the Forum, with some thirty countries responding to the call for this event<sup>172</sup>. As for the Middle Eastern countries, there were four of them, represented only by civil society<sup>173</sup>. Putting gender issues on the agenda in Arab countries is still difficult, as they remain taboo and struggle to arouse the enthusiasm of citizens, including young girls<sup>174</sup>. The Asian region was mainly, but not exclusively, represented by civil society with fourteen countries responding to the call<sup>175</sup>. Finally, Indonesia-Oceania was also mainly represented by civil society with five countries.<sup>176</sup>

Depending on the region, the involvement of CSOs is quite contrasted, some being more active than others. One may wonder about the reasons for the lack of interest of a part of civil society in a forum such as the GEF. By presenting the Forum as a war on anti-feminist regimes, which would have resulted in a more significant polarization, would the event have gained coverage and support from civil society around the world?

Comparing the countries with the largest global GDPs with those which made the strongest commitments during the Generation Equality Forum, several elements stand out. The countries with the highest GDPs in the Middle East are completely absent from the financial commitments made at the Forum. In the Americas, Canada and the United States are

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171 The European countries present at the GEF are: Iceland, Ireland, United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Netherlands, Lithuania, Poland, Denmark, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, France, Switzerland, Austria, Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Albania, Northern Macedonia, Italy, Andorra, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey and Georgia.

172 African countries: Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Mauritania, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, DRC, Sudan, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, South Africa.

173 Middle Eastern countries present at the GEF: United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Armenia and Palestine.

174 Interview with Virginie Poupene, freelance gender and development expert conducted on 04 October 2021.

175 Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Mongolia, China, Japan, Thailand, and Cambodia.

176 Countries concerned for Indonesia-Oceania: Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Australia.

## ■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

fully invested, including governments and philanthropic organizations, while in Mexico and Brazil, commitments are more scattered, mainly from civil society. In Europe, the top five states by GDP have all made financial commitments. In Sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya have fully engaged in several coalitions, while Ethiopia and Ghana remain absent, with the exception of commitments from Ghanaian civil society. Finally, in Oceania, Australia has committed to specific coalitions, while New Zealand has not produced any commitments. It is important to note that it is important to distinguish between government and civil society commitments, which do not necessarily go hand in hand and can give a distorted impression of state commitments when they are civil society commitments only.

- **Civil society as the driving force behind the Forum: youth in the spotlight**

Before the start of the Generation Equality Forum, the importance of placing youth at the centre of the process seemed to be emphasized through the prior establishment of a "Youth Task Force" composed of young leaders. At the opening ceremony of the Forum, a young activist took the floor, invited to the table by the host President, Emmanuel Macron, the Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres. Shantel Marekera, one of the 39 leaders of the Forum's Youth Working Group and founder of the Zimbabwean foundation Little Dreamers, set the tone for a global meeting where youth are making their demands heard by political and financial decision-makers: "We are done talking. We need transformative change, change that is visible to all. We want women and girls to notice that some change is happening. We will hold you accountable for your commitments."<sup>177</sup>

These young people have been able to meet up with the people's equality, on all the themes covered by the six action coalitions of the

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<sup>177</sup> Marekera Shantel, Opening ceremony of the Generation Equality Forum, 30 June 2021.

Generation Equality Forum. Youth from all over the world were active and extremely diverse at the Generation Equality Forum. The 97 commitments from youth organizations address specific themes such as the importance of mental health, networking in STEM careers and creating LGBTI+ friendly spaces. The 94 youth-led organizations thus laid out their specific demands in an intense intergenerational dialogue, embodied at the Forum's opening ceremony in Paris between former

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, one of the key figures of the Beijing Conference, and young Chilean climate activist Julieta Martinez, who spoke on behalf of all the young girls who are fighting for their rights and remain invisibilized. She said, "We can't just invite girls for the photo or for inspirational speeches. We need to be part of the conversation."<sup>178</sup> Also noteworthy is the presence of young leaders in the action coalitions from countries whose governments have made no financial commitment. This expresses the strength of a young, dynamic activism, fully mobilized for gender equality within the Forum.

- The narrowing scope of action and freedoms of civil society human rights movements

"Before, we were fighting to obtain rights; now we are fighting so that they are not taken away from us,"<sup>179</sup> said Brazilian professor and activist Cecilia Sardenberg. Many states strategically implement violence against gender minorities and do not hesitate to restrict their rights, so no rights, not even basic rights, are gained for women<sup>180</sup>. For Kamala Harris,

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178 *Ibid.* 177

179 Molyneu Maxine, Dey Adrija, A. C. Gatto Malu and Rowden Holly, "Feminist activism 25 years after Beijing," *Gender & Development*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2020.1750140>

180 We have already mentioned the virtual ban on abortion in Poland, Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, and the current situation in Afghanistan, where women are gradually being stripped of all their rights to participate in social, economic and political life. Source: France 24, "With the return of the Taliban, what future for women and girls in Afghanistan?", 16 August 2021, <https://www.france24.com/fr/asia-pacifique/20210816-avec-le-retour-des-taliban-quel-avenir-pour-les-femmes-et-les-fillettes-en-afghanistan>

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Vice President of the United States, equality strengthens democracy<sup>181</sup>. The struggle of women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in this regard is crucial. They face "unprecedented violence and backlash, including lethal violence and targeted killings,"<sup>182</sup> particularly in the Middle East, North Africa (MENA) and Asia. The civic space vital to HRDs' struggle for women's rights is rapidly closing, under the influence of growing conservatism and extremism. In Afghanistan, HRDs targeted by the Taliban are forced underground and live under the threat of arrest and/or torture<sup>183</sup>. Using social networks to denounce dictatorial states, HRDs strive to use loopholes in their increased control to continue their struggle. "We are fighting for our survival"<sup>184</sup>, says Shiva Nazar Ahari, an Iranian human rights activist who has been repeatedly imprisoned by the Iranian government.

The threat to HRDs and women's movements caused by patriarchal structures is often justified "in the name of family values, religion, national security, counter-terrorism and extremism or even to emphasize the promotion of peace"<sup>185</sup>. In November 2020, the Egyptian authorities placed several HRDs in pre-trial detention, accused of joining terrorist groups and spreading false information dangerous to public safety and the inte-

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181 Speech by Kamala Harris, Vice President of the United States of America, at the opening ceremony of the Forum

182 Discussion "Defending and Claiming Women's Rights in the Context of Shrinking Civic Space and Growing Extremism," June 30, 2021 at 11:40 a.m. on the GEF platform, with Zubaida Akbar (Afghanistan), Razan El Moghrabi (Libya), Shiva Nazar Ahari (Iran), Marlyn Tadros (Egypt)

183 Amnesty International, "Afghanistan: How the Taliban Attack Human Rights", September 2021, <https://www.amnesty.fr/liberte-d-expression/actualites/afghanistan-comment-les-talibans-attaquent-droits-humains>

184 Shiva Nazar Ahari, Discussion "Defending and Claiming Women's Rights in the Context of Shrinking Civic Space and Growing Extremism," June 30, 2021 at 11:40 a.m. on the GEF platform

185 Discussion "Defending and Claiming Women's Rights in the Context of Shrinking Civic Space and Growing Extremism", June 30, 2021 at 11:40 a.m. on the GEF platform, with Zubaida Akbar (Afghanistan), Razan El Moghrabi (Libya), Shiva Nazar Ahari (Iran), Marlyn Tadros (Egypt)

rests of Egypt<sup>186</sup>. Similar facts were reported in Iran, where in November 2019 activists, lawyers and HRDs, who were peacefully demonstrating, were arrested, under the pretext of not respecting order and security<sup>187</sup>. In authoritarian states that are subject to economic sanctions by state or international institutions, activists are subjected to a greatly degraded economic condition. They risk imprisonment after unfair trials, extra-judicial executions, and worry about the repercussions for their families. HRDs are used to hate speech and death threats. Online platforms and spaces, including social networks, which are crucial for raising awareness and mobilizing the general public, are also the site of multiple acts of violence. In this regard, Razan El Moghrabi, a Libyan feminist activist, denounces new state strategies of persecution against activists: new laws, defamation campaigns, exclusion, marginalization, publication of personal details, increased surveillance through the use of technologies imported from Europe and the United States<sup>188</sup>, for example, Raven's technology<sup>189</sup> or Pegasus<sup>190</sup> software, which target the personal data of HRDs in favour of targeting for certain states.

- The private sector: a key donor with a worrying influence

The private sector is one of the protagonists of the GEF, through

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186 Sallon Hélène, "En Egypte, une nouvelle offensive contre la société civile", Le Monde, November 2020, [https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2020/11/20/en-egypte-une-nouvelle-offensive-contre-la-societe-civile\\_6060473\\_3210.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2020/11/20/en-egypte-une-nouvelle-offensive-contre-la-societe-civile_6060473_3210.html)

187 Human rights Watch, "Iran: Relentless Repression of Dissent," January 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/01/13/iran-relentless-repression-dissent>

188 Discussion "Defending and Claiming Women's Rights in the Context of Shrinking Civic Space and Growing Extremism", June 30, 2021 at 11:40 am on the GEF platform, with Zubaida Akbar (Afghanistan), Razan El Moghrabi (Libya), Shiva Nazar Ahari (Iran), Marlyn Tadros (Egypt).

189 Schectman Joel and Bing Christopher, "Ex-U.S. intel operatives admit hacking American networks for UAE," REUTERS, September 15, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/american-hacker-mercenaries-face-us-charges-work-uae-2021-09-14/>

190 United Nations, UN Info, "Pegasus: Human rights-compliant laws needed to regulate spyware," July 20, 2021, <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2021/07/1100402#:~:text=La%20cheffe%20des%20droits%20de,journalistes%20et%20des%20responsables%20politiques>

## ■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

its massive financial investment in the various action coalitions and its commitments to gender equality. The example of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which has committed \$2.1 billion to women's leadership, reproductive health and economic empowerment, is instructive. The Foundation has been investing in the fight against poverty and inequality in health, gender, and the economy for twenty years through numerous NGOs and nonprofits such as Equipop, Technoserve, Farm Concern International, FANRPANI<sup>191</sup>, which work in areas such as global health, development assistance and emergency aid. However, the NGO CNCD-11.11.11, involved in development cooperation and international solidarity, criticizes the functioning of the Foundation, judging it to be too rooted in corporate logic and active in particular in the distribution of medicines in the countries of the South, which would mainly benefit pharmaceutical companies.<sup>192</sup>

The growing role of the private sector is indeed a cause for concern, both for States and civil society. Through its financial power, the private sector is in direct competition with States. On the other hand, it is not, by definition, a guarantor of the general interest, but pursues a profit objective. According to Nicolas Rainaud, co-head of international advocacy at the NGO Equipop, recourse to the private sector tends to make state actors less accountable to citizens, whereas it remains the role of public authorities to finance action plans in favour of gender equality<sup>193</sup>. CSOs also highlight the risk of pinkwashing and/or feminism washing, since many companies and multinationals seek to create an image that is concerned with equality for purely commercial purposes<sup>194</sup>. However,

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191 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, "Committed grants database," Gates Foundation <https://www.gatesfoundation.org/about/committed-grants>

192 Pollet Jean-François, "The Gates Foundation or (mis)ordered charity", CNCD 11.11.11, March 2014, <https://www.cncd.be/La-Fondation-Gates-ou-la-charite>

193 Interview with Nicolas Rainaud, Head of International Advocacy at Equipop and member of the High Council for Equality, 28 October 2021

194 Bouanchaud Cécile, " Le terme de pinkwashing revêt une dimension négative, avec l'idée d'hypocrisie des marques ", Le Monde, 26 juin 2021, [https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2021/06/26/le-terme-de-pinkwashing-revet-une-dimension-negative-avec-l-idee-d-hypocrisie-des-marques\\_6085781\\_3224.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2021/06/26/le-terme-de-pinkwashing-revet-une-dimension-negative-avec-l-idee-d-hypocrisie-des-marques_6085781_3224.html)

Nicolas Rainaud believes that it is still important to include the private sector in the discussions. The financial inclusion of women must go through the banks, and integrating them into the action for equality is therefore essential. In addition, private companies and foundations can greatly contribute to the equality agenda, thanks to their financial means and influence. Moreover, they have proven to be reliable when it came to keep the promises made: at Equipop, private sector donors allow a great deal of freedom in the conduct of the projects they fund<sup>195</sup>. On the other hand, governments, however willing they may be in their commitments, are subject to heavier budgetary and financial constraints, which may compromise their effective financial commitment.

The low representation of multinational companies at the Forum, compared to the number of them that claim to be feminists and that boast of their action in favor of gender equality through charters, was highlighted in an interview with Fabrice Ferrier, Director of Focus 2030. Even if multinational companies should not be directly involved in the governance of state institutions, they should have fought to be present, because their contribution to the achievement of gender equality is indispensable.<sup>196</sup>

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195 Interview with Nicolas Rainaud, Equipop's international advocacy manager and member of the High Council for Equality, conducted on 28 October 2021

196 Interview with Fabrice Ferrier, Managing Director of Focus 2030, and Caroline de Crémoux, program Manager for Focus 2030, on 21 October 2021.

■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

Three examples of initiatives taken by the actors involved

**Organisations internationales**

**Malala Fund (UNESCO)**

Provide at least \$20 billion in funding to feminist activists for girls' education.

**UN Women (on the initiative of the Mexican government)**

Expand the Global Care Alliance (over 39 states).

**FIDA**

\$500 million to promote climate justice and gender.

**States**

**Kenya**

Create a national strategy and allocate resources to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

**Canada**

Invest in systems of care for women and girls.

**Georgia**

Conduct legislative reform on the legal definition of rape.

### **Philanthropic organizations**

#### **Open Society Foundation**

Dedicate at least \$100 million over 5 years to fund feminist political mobilization and leadership.

#### **Fondation Ford**

\$420 million to address threats to women's rights from Covid-19.

#### **Children's Investment Fund Foundation**

\$500 million for DSSRs.

### **Civil society organizations**

#### **Raise Your Voice Sainte-Lucie**

To work with Caribbean NGOs to advocate for the recognition of the LGBTI+ community and to undertake region-wide legislative reform to minimise discrimination

#### **Data2X soutenue par PayPal**

Create a microsite to present and analyze gender data and host it in one place.

#### **Equality Fund**

\$90 million to support women's leadership and movements.

## ■ What kind of commitments to transform the lives of women?

### Private sector companies

#### P&G

- Advancing economic justice and women's rights across its global value chain by allocating \$10 billion to women-owned and -led businesses by 2025.
- Create a 3-year partnership with the NGO Promundo to fight against GBV.

#### PayPal

\$100 million to promote women's economic empowerment.

The commitments were not only financial, but also political, advocacy and programmatic. The draft international conventions or their ratifications have been supported by various actors and have been subject of intense advocacy work by society organizations and international institutions. These organizations and institutions encourage states to ratify them<sup>197</sup>. The Convention n° 190 on violence and harassment of the International Labour Organization, adopted in 2019 and recently entered into force on 25 June 2021<sup>198</sup>, is the subject of such advocacy. The creation of an international convention for an international fight against sexual violence during conflicts<sup>199</sup>, is pleaded by Denis Mukwege, gynecologist

197 Ratification is the international act by which a State indicates its consent to be bound by a treaty or an international convention.

198 Convention C190 - Convention (No. 190) of the International Labour Organization on Violence and Harassment, which was adopted in 2019 and entered into force on 25 June 2021, has been ratified by only eight states. Source : [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/fr/?p=NORMLEXPUB:11300:0::NO::P11300\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:3999810](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/fr/?p=NORMLEXPUB:11300:0::NO::P11300_INSTRUMENT_ID:3999810)

199 There is no such convention, but these crimes are a priori punishable under Geneva law and sanctioned by the treaty establishing the International Criminal Court, ratified by a large number of states.

and Congolese human rights activist<sup>200</sup>.

Finally, some states presented plans for policy reforms (the creation of specific bodies to address GBV in South Africa), judicial reforms (Georgia and the criminal definition of rape), as well as economic or social plans (Mexican care alliance). Civil society and philanthropic organizations have committed to intensify their advocacy with the government.

To conclude on the commitments announced at the GEF, it appears that the total amount of commitments made is about \$36 billion<sup>201</sup>, close to the amount announced by UN Women. The socio-economic rights coalition is the most funded coalition, followed by the SRHR coalition, the GBV, feminist leadership, feminist action for climate justice, and technology and innovation for gender equality. The coalition on the SDGs represents the most consensual rights, and even when states are hostile to the advancement of women's rights, few oppose women's economic empowerment head-on. Indeed, this empowerment allows, among other things, an increase in the national GDP of many States<sup>202</sup>. On the other hand, the same cannot be said for SRHR, even though they are at the heart of the second most funded coalition, they remain among the most fought for rights at the international level. At the regional level, commitments are largely funded by the American continent, followed by the European continent and Africa. The Asian continent, the Middle East and Oceania were comparatively less mobilized than the other regions.

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200 Denis Mukwege is a gynecologist doctor in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize winner. Source: Le Monde, "Denis Mukwege, Nobel Peace Prize winner: 'An international convention is needed to eliminate the use of rape as a weapon of war'," June 30, 2021, [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2021/06/30/denis-mukwege-il-faut-une-convention-internationale-pour-eliminer-l-usage-du-viol-comme-arme-de-guerre\\_6086289\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2021/06/30/denis-mukwege-il-faut-une-convention-internationale-pour-eliminer-l-usage-du-viol-comme-arme-de-guerre_6086289_3212.html)

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202 United Nations Sustainable Development Group, "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment", 2021, <https://unsdg.un.org/fr/2030-agenda/universal-values/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>

Shortly after completing her eight-year term as Executive Director of UN Women<sup>203</sup>, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka regreted the lack of resources dedicated to the fight against gender inequality, acknowledging that governments alone could not solve it<sup>204</sup>. The Global Gender Equality Acceleration Agenda for the next five years has been funded with \$40 billion, including "\$21 billion from governments, \$13 billion from the private sector, \$4.5 billion from foundations and \$1.3 billion from international and regional organizations<sup>205</sup>. In this respect, the GEF was partially successful in bringing together actors capable of funding and mobilizing their advocacy capacity to advance the gender equality agenda. Was the GEF really the transformative international feminist summit that was expected for 26 years? Uncertainties remain.

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203 UN Secretary General A. Guterres appointed Jordan's Sima Sami Bahous to the position on Sept. 13, United Nations, "Secretary-General Appoints Ms. Sima Sami Bahous of Jordan as Executive Director of UN-Women," Sept. 13, 2021, <https://www.un.org/press/fr/2021/sga2062.doc.htm-0>

204 AP, "UN Women hopes to promote gender equality, see more female leaders in 5 years with \$40bn," Economic Times, August 20, 2021, [https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/un-women-hopes-to-promote-gender-equality-see-more-female-leaders-in-5-years-with-40-bn/articleshow/85483373.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/un-women-hopes-to-promote-gender-equality-see-more-female-leaders-in-5-years-with-40-bn/articleshow/85483373.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

205 UN Women France " Return on the Generation Equality Forum ", News, 12 July 2021, <https://www.onufemmes.fr/nos-actualites/2021/7/12/retour-sur-le-forum-generation-egalite>

# Part III. Between announcements and reality: what can we expect after the Generation Equality Forum?

## A. Turning political will into action: the need to monitor commitments

Attempting to analyze the consequences and impact of commitments in the future is a complex exercise. Declaratory, non-innovative, confusing, a significant number of the commitments announced at the Forum may be difficult to budget for and therefore to implement. Those that are budgeted for may be difficult for the countries concerned to achieve. Civil society is concerned that the \$40 billion<sup>206</sup> will not be enough, first, to overcome the effects of the health crisis and, second, to achieve gender equality. There are too few state actors at the GEF to ensure that their actions do not benefit everyone: 68 states participated in the Forum, out of the 193 that make up international state society. Moreover, the budgets of all the States of the world are burdened with a debt increased by the consequences of Covid-19<sup>207</sup>, an argument invoked by certain countries in order to relegate the fight for gender equality to the background.<sup>208</sup>

Is \$40 billion a paltry sum given the challenges of gender equality in the world? For Fabrice Ferrier, this is not the case: "40 billion dollars is a large sum. Disbursing this much money is extremely complex (...) \$40 billion is roughly one third of all development aid in the world, to

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206 Wodon Quentin, De La Brière Bénédicte, "Unrealized Potential: The cost of gender equality :The High Cost of Gender Inequality in Earnings", Global Partnership, 2018, <https://www.onufemmes.fr/nos-actualites/2021/7/12/retour-sur-le-forum-generation-egalite>

207 Jones Marc, "COVID-19 has increased the world's debt by \$24,000 billion in 2020, according to the IIF," La Tribune, February 17, 2021, <https://www.latribune.fr/depeches/reuters/KBN2AH2IO/le-covid-19-a-alourdi-la-dette-mondiale-de-24-000-milliards-de-dollars-en-2020-selon-l-iif.html>

208 Representative of FEMNET, African Women's Development and Communication Network at the UN Women webinar "76th UNGA - Convening on the Action Coalitions Future and Five-Year Journey", 29 September 2021.

## ■ Between announcements and reality: what can we expect after the GEF?

finance six coalitions of actions aimed at achieving gender equality"<sup>209</sup>. As a comparison, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which is based on the specific goal of halving the number of people affected by the disease, has a budget of \$14 billion over three years.<sup>210</sup>

Furthermore, changing governments could play a role in whether or not these commitments are maintained. For example, the United States under Donald Trump was opposed to any international discussion of SSRD, but the inauguration of Joe Biden's administration has allowed the United States to participate in the Forum and will undoubtedly allow for future commitments, and above all their implementation, on this issue. France has announced the allocation of 100 million euros to promote DSSR, but it remains impossible to know whether this support will be maintained by a newly elected president in 2022.

Some commitments have been defined and budgeted for, such as Canada's stimulus package (30 billion Canadian dollars over five years to finance childcare services, 601.3 million Canadian dollars over five years to fight GBV)<sup>211</sup>. Qualitative and quantitative objectives have been presented (number of women who will benefit from the program, implementation timeframe) and an evaluation of the program's impact will be planned.

The investments and actions promised will apply at different levels of action, whether local, national, regional or global. At the regional level, in Africa, the CSO World Movement of Pan-African Women Leaders in alliance with "other organizations" will work on strengthening women's rights and the crucial role of decent work for an equitable and sustainable recovery. It will engage in a development project on redressing the

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209 Interview with Fabrice Ferrier, Managing Director of Focus 2030, and Caroline deCré-moux, program Manager for Focus 2030, on 21 October 2021.

210 *Ibid* 209.

211 Government of Canada, "Government of Canada Announces Recipients of the \$100 Million Women's Recovery and Response Fund," July 2021, <https://www.canada.ca/fr/femmes-egalite-genres/nouvelles/2021/07/le-gouvernement-du-canada-devoile-les-noms-des-organismes-beneficiaires-du-fonds-de-reponse-et-de-reliance-feministes-100millions-de-dollars.html>

effects of Covid-19 on women in Africa. Based on "human rights including fundamental rights at work and oriented towards the promotion and protection of human rights", this project will work to ensure that these rights are integrated into the policies and strategies adopted by the stakeholders to exit the crisis"<sup>212</sup>.

Some commitments are cross-cutting, addressing issues common to several coalitions of action and several regions of the world. This is the case of the OECD, which commits to supporting governments, private companies, philanthropic organizations and other stakeholders with evidence-based analysis and data on gender, allowing for comparative analysis at the international level, in order to improve policy development and monitoring<sup>213</sup>. We note that this commitment, which is not quantified, concerns four coalitions of action: GBV, women's action for climate justice, technology and feminist leadership. This commitment is also particularly vague, as it does not contain quantitative or qualitative objectives.

Promising inter-state alliances were presented, such as that between the governments of Burkina Faso, Benin, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Togo to develop joint commitments related to comprehensive sexuality education, although it is called 'family life education' because of societal taboos, free health care for pregnant women and children under five, and of legal and social change pursuit to end gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation and child marriage. Although not funded, the value of this commitment is that of a regional partnership, which allows for coherence between the different national policies of the states involved.

Some states have been very active in one or more coalitions, to the detriment of others. Canada, for example, is very involved in the coalition to combat gender-based violence, but has not made a commitment to the Women's Climate Justice Action Coalition, despite its strong involvement in international environmental diplomacy. Canadian projects in the

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212 Map of Forum commitments, <https://forumgenerationegalite.fr/page-map>

213 Ibid

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latter have been formulated by civil society. This coalition addresses relatively new concerns in international civil society, and its links to gender equality make it a critical issue for our common future. As a result, the conspicuous absence of some states from the coalition does not allow it to be considered fully supported.

Furthermore, not all action coalitions have received the same level of support, whether in terms of financial amount, number of commitments or actors involved. Some coalitions appear to be neglected, with the FACJ and technology coalitions largely under-funded, and key players absent, such as China and Australia. Finally, the commitment to contribute 1% of each state's GDP has not been met, despite the strong recommendation of civil society. The global GDP for the year 2019 reached \$84,966 billion<sup>214</sup>. Applying this recommendation, financing gender equality at 1% of global GDP would represent nearly \$84.9 billion, a far cry from the \$40 billion announced at the GEF.

The amount which will be paid is not always defined in the commitments, or the number or identity of the beneficiaries: associations, women, a category of women, the whole population? Will these objectives be quantified in the future? On the contrary, other commitments are particularly precise, such as the action promised in the GBV coalition by the Kering Foundation, a philanthropic organization, which wishes to "consolidate its support to specialized associations as well as to grassroots associations working with young people and support the economic integration of women survivors. Over the next three years, the Kering Foundation is committed to continuing its support to six national organizations specializing in domestic violence and six women's funds for a total of 1.7 million euros"<sup>215</sup>. However, it should be noted that this commitment is in fact a continuation of previous work and partnerships and is therefore not innovative.

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214 World Bank, Chart: World GDP since 2010, <https://donnees.banquemondiale.org/indicateur/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD>

215 Map of GEF commitments, <https://forumgenerationegalite.fr/page-map>

When the objective is determined, the means to achieve it are sometimes missing. If they are quantified, the commitments do not always determine the amount allocated and/or the coalition concerned. This is illustrated by the programmatic commitment of the Salvadoran government, whose Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is providing support to the tune of \$323,723, but with a relatively vague aim: "to share El Salvador's good practices in technological transformation and innovation and the impact of this development on the reduction of the gender digital divide in education"<sup>216</sup>. Will these projects, the identity of their actors, and their conditions of application, particularly with regard to the allocation of funds, be specified subsequently? For the moment, we are not in a position to answer these questions, which are nonetheless crucial to the fulfilment of the commitments made during the GEF.

## B. Lack of accountability: the major obstacle to the effectiveness of the GEF promises

UN Women, in its role as secretariat to the GEF coalitions of action, is to produce an annual report that will monitor the implementation of the commitments by 2023, the midpoint of the commitment implementation schedule. As of October 2021, four months after the Generation Equality Forum, UN Women's accountability mechanism has not yet been presented. The plan was to be the subject of a side event at the 76th UN General Assembly<sup>217</sup>, which took place from 14 to 30 September. Presenting the GEF accountability framework after the event does not seem "entirely logical"<sup>218</sup>, according to Nicolas Rainaud, as the commitments presented should be thought out according to the criteria included in

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216 *Ibid.* 115

217 UN Women France "Looking back on the Generation Equality Forum", 12 July 2021, <https://www.onufemmes.fr/nos-actualites/2021/7/12/retour-sur-le-forum-generation-egalite>

218 Interview with Nicolas Rainaud, Equipop's international advocacy manager and member of the High Council for Equality, conducted on October 28, 2021.

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the accountability framework. On September 29, 2021, a meeting on the future and the five-year path of the action coalitions was organized by UN Women<sup>219</sup>. At this meeting, Action Coalition pledgers were invited to share their vision of the accountability that should be instituted: inclusive, transformative, intergenerational. The goal of the Forum's action coalitions is to "change the lives of women and girls"<sup>220</sup> and because women's rights are fundamental, the accountability of actors committed to promoting them must be rigorously defined and enforced.

### • UN accountability mechanisms: how do they work?

Accountability mechanisms are generally put in place to ensure compliance with international obligations contained in UN treaties. For Ban Ki Moon, former UN Secretary-General, "the high standards, confidence in humanity and hope for the future expressed in UN human rights instruments require robust accountability mechanisms to ensure the realization of these rights"<sup>221</sup>.

Definitions of accountability vary. They often refer to being accountable, being responsible. On the other hand, the different approaches to accountability, whether horizontal, vertical or integrative, reflect a variety of responsibilities. To whom, under what conditions and over what period of time? Accountability is a matter of trust: "those in power 'give an account' of the use they have made of the trust placed in them by the public and of State funds"<sup>222</sup>.

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219 UN Women Webinar "76th UNGA - Convening on the Action Coalitions Future and Five-Year Journey", 29 September 2021

220 *Ibid*

221 Ban Ki Moon, former UN Secretary General, UNIFEM United Nations Development Fund for Women "Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009 - Who is accountable to women? - Gender and Accountability", 2008, <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?reldoc=y&docid=4a0977a42>

222 UNIFEM United Nations Development Fund for Women "Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009 - Who is accountable to women? - Gender and Accountability", 2008 <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?reldoc=y&docid=4a0977a42>

In a triangular model of authorisation, evaluation and correction, policy makers provide guidance and resources to the public service provider, review its performance and eventually sanction it. The public expresses its satisfaction or dissatisfaction through participation in the electoral process and lobbying. Accountability is exercised on each of the actors. Accountability also has a vertical and horizontal dimension. While, the public elects the institutions holding executive, legislative and judicial powers, these three powers are accountable to each other. Public administration reports and public audits allow them to evaluate each other's actions. In the context of the GEF, what about the fact that UN Women is presenting a model of accountability for the commitments that the organization itself has endorsed? It is indeed intended that the accountability framework be put in place by UN Women.

- Evaluation of commitments: a necessary step towards concrete accountability

At the heart of accountability is the monitoring and evaluation of all commitments, financial and otherwise, announced at the UN Women Forum. It is sensitive to the proper evaluation of programs aimed at gender equality. Its Independent Evaluation Office<sup>223</sup> (IEO) published a manual in 2015 for stakeholders of such programs to conduct a mid-term and final gender-sensitive evaluation of projects<sup>224</sup>. The evaluation should be conducted in a systematic and impartial manner with clearly measurable objectives and indicators<sup>225</sup>. The evaluation conducted should examine the extent to which gender and power relations, the structural causes of inequalities between women and men, are impacted as a result of an intervention using a process that is inclusive, participato-

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223 The IEO reports directly to the Executive Director of UN Women in order to safeguard its managerial independence and conduct its work impartially. It is composed of evaluation specialists based both at headquarters and in regional offices.

224 IEO, "Managing Gender-Sensitive Evaluations - Evaluation Handbook," 2015, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c78efe065019f922db505cb/t/5c840135e5e5f02ba2e63a68/1552154945339/UN-Women-Evaluation-Handbook-fr.pdf>

225 *Ibid.*

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ry and respectful of all stakeholders (donors, beneficiaries, etc.). Evaluation itself contributes to the achievement of gender equality: it promotes the accountability of Member States and the fulfilment of commitments to gender equality, as well as human rights. Gender-responsive evaluation strengthens social cohesion and communication between all stakeholders (participants, program managers, evaluators), including civil society, by striving to involve citizens in the evaluation process.

The major problem with UN Women being the originator of the GEF accountability model is that the UN agency is composed and funded by UN member states<sup>226</sup>. Thus, the UN obstacles related to hostility towards women's rights experienced over the past 26 years are likely to be repeated. It is for this reason that civil society has been advocating for a real steering role in this accountability mechanism. While UN Women cannot deploy methods to pressure member states and private companies on commitments made, civil society has a crucial role to play in this regard.

"Double counting"<sup>227</sup> is another obstacle to the practical effectiveness of the GEF. 40 billion dollars for gender equality sounds like a substantial financial boost, but it really depends on how this amount is distributed. If the money is really given where it is most needed, namely in developing countries, and for the benefit of the most disadvantaged communities, this distribution will be satisfactory. If not, the transformative purpose of the Forum will not be achieved. It has been defined that the investments promised by GEF actors must be additional: donors must not "recycle" sums already allocated to national or international organizations, at the risk of promising a sum twice.<sup>228</sup>

The very format of the Forum presents difficulties with regard to the accountability model envisaged. Fabrice Ferrier reminds us that the States volunteers at the GEF are not used to working together, nor are

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226 Interview with Fabrice Ferrier, Executive Director of Focus 2030, and Caroline de Crémoux, program Officer for Focus 2030, on 21 October 2021.

227 *Ibid.*

228 *Ibid.*

they used to collectively basing their actions on achieving gender equality<sup>229</sup>. For two years, a UN entity, without a mandate, created the GEF from scratch, but none of the pre-established models within the UN can be applied to the Forum. Indeed, within the UN, the rule is clear: one nation, one vote. At the Forum, some of its members focused on gender equality. It was "courageous, agile and politically relevant"<sup>230</sup>. However, it seems inconceivable to give the same strength, the same voice, to a civil society organisation as to a state, because of their different power of influence and impact. The variety of actors, from the private sector, philanthropy, civil society or guarantors of the general interest, has the advantage of having allowed an inclusive Forum, at the risk perhaps of over-complexifying the decision-making process. The choice of entrusting fewer actors with the task of qualifying the relevant evaluation indicators (amounts, number of people, annual reporting, etc.) would certainly have been more effective. The format of the GEF is new, and so will be its accountability model: everything has to be created. Setting a framework and activity indicators based on results are complex exercises. Civil society has been calling for clear accountability mechanisms for the past year and a half, with no response as yet. As such, the primary contact to answer these questions seemed to be the GEF Secretariat<sup>231</sup>. The secretariat responded that the task of defining this framework was not its responsibility, as issues of governance, accountability and monitoring of commitments would be the responsibility of the UN headquarters in New York, USA.

- **Civil society recommendations for accountability**

It is impossible to establish binding mechanisms within the framework of the GEF. The Forum, although organized under the aegis of UN Women, is not a UN summit per se. The investment pledges were made

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229 Interview with Fabrice Ferrier, Executive Director of Focus 2030, and Caroline de Crémoux, program Officer for Focus 2030, on 21 October 2021.

230 *Ibid.*

231 *Ibid.*

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on the basis of the will of the actors. In the event of non-fulfilment of the commitments made - i.e. failure to disburse funds or failure to carry out actions - it seems difficult a priori to envisage sanctions. The accountability mechanism will therefore not be subject to sanctions, but civil society has expressed its expectations regarding its content. Civil society organisations unanimously call for "integrated, clear, transparent, robust"<sup>232</sup> accountability mechanisms. ONE, a US-based advocacy NGO that fights extreme poverty, suggests taking inspiration from the Open Government Partnership (OGP)<sup>233</sup>, a broad multi-stakeholder partnership of states, local governments and CSOs that work together on various action plans (health, education, digital governance, etc.)<sup>234</sup>. Another interesting proposal, made by a civil society working group ahead of the GEF, consists of three main recommendations: "to ensure principled accountability; to enable young women, girls and gender non-conforming people in all their diversity to lead; and to develop in a participatory manner a nested, independent and sustainable monitoring mechanism of the outcomes and processes of the GEF"<sup>235</sup>. The dialogues have also highlighted a desire for the "differentiated roles"<sup>236</sup> for governments, civil society organizations, women's movements, youth networks and organizations, UN agencies and the private sector to be resulting in "differentiated responsibilities"<sup>237</sup>.

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232 Ahumada Claudia, "Rethinking Accountability from a Feminist and Youth Perspective", IPPF, 2021, [https://www.ippfamr.org/sites/ippfamr/files/2021-07/French\\_Repenser\\_la\\_responsabilite%CC%81.pdf](https://www.ippfamr.org/sites/ippfamr/files/2021-07/French_Repenser_la_responsabilite%CC%81.pdf)

233 Legault Elise, "Progress, Not Promises: An Accountability Mechanism for Gender Equality," ONE, June 4, 2019, <https://www.one.org/canada/fr/blog/des-progres-pas-des-promesses-un-mecanisme-de-redevabilite-pour-legalite-des-genres/>

234 BMP, "Presentation", <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/fr/about/approach/>

235 Ahumada Claudia, "Rethinking Accountability from a Feminist and Youth Perspective", IPPF, 2021, [https://www.ippfamr.org/sites/ippfamr/files/2021-07/French\\_Repenser\\_la\\_responsabilite%CC%81.pdf](https://www.ippfamr.org/sites/ippfamr/files/2021-07/French_Repenser_la_responsabilite%CC%81.pdf)

236 Legault Elise, "Progress, Not Promises: An Accountability Mechanism for Gender Equality," ONE, June 4, 2019, <https://www.one.org/canada/fr/blog/des-progres-pas-des-promesses-un-mecanisme-de-redevabilite-pour-legalite-des-genres/>

237 Ahumada Claudia, "Rethinking Accountability from a Feminist and Youth Perspective", IPPF, 2021, [https://www.ippfamr.org/sites/ippfamr/files/2021-07/French\\_Repenser\\_la\\_responsabilite%CC%81.pdf](https://www.ippfamr.org/sites/ippfamr/files/2021-07/French_Repenser_la_responsabilite%CC%81.pdf)

An accountability mechanism, based on the review of the impacts of commitments, is thus essential to the credibility of the Forum and the commitments. According to Sarah Hendricks, program Director in the Policy and Intergovernmental Division of UN Women, "The dynamic journey of the coalitions of action began with a deep reflection on the lack of progress and results of the Beijing Platform, which led them to think about coalitions of action. Now we are in the moment of the journey to ensure a framework for accountability<sup>238</sup>. The thorny question of accountability can be asked as follows: who is responsible for the women's rights that the GEF has set out to defend?"

The idea of defining an accountability framework by action coalition seems to have been retained<sup>239</sup>. This modality would make it possible to adapt accountability as close as possible to the commitments, an evaluation of the impact of the promises where they are to be fulfilled. This seems relevant, especially when the commitment is issued by a State and aims to be applied on its national territory. However, this accountability by action coalition adds a layer of complexity to the whole scheme. However, this model has sometimes proved its worth in the past, particularly in the area of mother and child health<sup>240</sup>. The Muskoka Fund initiative, implemented by the French Development Agency (AFD), is an example.<sup>241</sup>

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238 UN Women Webinar "76th UNGA - Convening on the Action Coalitions Future and Five Year Journey", 29 September 2021

239 Interview with Fabrice Ferrier, Managing Director of Focus 2030, and Caroline de Crémoux, Program Manager for Focus 2030, October 21, 2021.

240 *Ibid.*

241 This fund has similarities with the GEF in its format, as it was created following the G8 in 2010, a meeting that was just as informal as the Forum, at the call of Canada. It is also similar in its purpose, in the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals. It was therefore decided to collectively mobilize the necessary funds to achieve this, over five years. Although only seven countries participated in this initiative, the effectiveness of the model was praised and the promises were kept. An agreement had been reached on the method of calculation according to the objective to be reached: the methodology differentiated the financing granted to projects aiming at directly reducing maternal and infant mortality, from initiatives contributing partially or indirectly to it. The NGOs then developed and obtained - an annual accountability assessment in each host country G8.

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- The limits of the GEF format: the reinforcement of the geopolitical schism and the risk of instrumentalizing gender equality

Was this summit a reflection of a genuine desire for change, or was it a reflection of political opportunism? Both theories can be supported. The actors gathered at the GEF have divergent opinions and visions. This is evidenced by the absence of certain issues on the agenda of the discussion panels, such as prostitution, or the situation of undocumented immigrant women. The fear of divisions probably pushed the GEF organizers to limit the topics deemed divisive, faced with the risk of weakening the image of unity of progressives. It must be noted that the Forum nevertheless succeeded in attracting the support of countries where the situation of women is particularly precarious, such as Burkina Faso and Mexico. The aim is to create a leverage effect, enabling cooperation to be strengthened in the future in favour of women's and girls' rights.

"The new multilateralism we must build today will undoubtedly be judged by our ability to promote and defend, together, the rights of women and girls"<sup>242</sup> said the French Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian. The issues underlying this new multilateralism are complex. While breaking free from UN constraints allows for progress on women's rights, there is a risk that the format and strategy of the GEF may present risks. Indeed, this format also benefits states hostile to gender equality. Excluded de facto, they certainly no longer hinder possible progress among cooperating states, but within the UN, the only negotiating organization bringing together most of the world's states, progress remains impossible. The decisions taken at the GEF are thus deprived of their general character. With the GEF, we are witnessing a two-speed (re)mobilization: on the one hand, those who are

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242 UN Info, "Generation Equality Forum in Mexico Concludes with New Commitments to Gender Equality," 1er April 2021, <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2021/04/1093172#:~:text=%C2%AB%20Le%20nouveau%20multilat%C3%A9ralisme%20que%20nous,%2C%20Jean%2DYves%20Le%20Drian>.

moving forward, on the other, those who refuse to commit themselves.

The inclusive format of the summit certainly gives it a great deal of legitimacy, but at the same time, the States continue to take away responsibility for the feminist cause. Civil society also regrets not having been more involved in the process, as their role is crucial in the fight for gender equality. Its council is advisory, not decision-making. The inconsistency of creating an inclusive format without including the most active actors and experts, to the extent of their involvement, must be underlined. Underfunded, civil society does not have sufficient mobilization<sup>243</sup> power to simply refuse this status. The disagreements between feminist organizations weaken the feminist bloc even more. Indeed, feminist movements are complex, as they evolve rapidly, due to the ever-increasing number of citizens who are aware of gender equality. This trend has an impact on activist movements, which are international, diverse and sometimes opposed: intersectional or not, radical or liberal, decolonial or universalist, etc. States that are resistant to gender equality use these oppositions, caricature them and demonize them. After 26 years without an international summit on gender equality, an intense mobilization of civil society would have made it possible to increase the pressure on heads of state and government for real change. The lack of an international culture within the feminist movement, the increasing depoliticization of many issues under the influence of ultra-liberalism, which has led to the increased disengagement of public authorities, and the disenchantment of citizens regarding current multilateralism<sup>244</sup> are all factors that help to explain the weaknesses of the mobilization around the GEF.

The GEF can also be used for electoral purposes. In this sense, in order to ensure the accountability of the pledge holders at the Forum, "it must

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243 Interview with Nicolas Rainaud, Head of International Advocacy at Equipop and member of the High Council for Equality, conducted on 28 October 2021

244 United Nations, "UN 75 Poll: Health, climate and multilateralism top priorities for global citizens," January 2021, <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2021/01/1086162>

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be made a diplomatic and elective issue"<sup>245</sup>, since effective accountability is strictly linked to the introduction of sanctions or the organization of elections. With less than a year to go before the presidential election in France, Emmanuel Macron has every interest in highlighting his feminist record. In response to the growing importance of equality issues in France, the rhetoric of the French government is that this term has made far more progress than any previous one. However, the progress made is far from being commensurate with France's advocacy for women's rights and gender equality. Furthermore, the participation in the GEF of States that prohibit homosexuality or do not fight gender-based violence against women and girls at the national level does not reflect a genuine commitment to gender equality.

The real investment of French diplomacy and its diplomatic networks around the world in the run-up to the GEF was welcomed by the members of civil society. However, CSOs raise a major problem: the apparent lack of continuity of French political leadership vis-à-vis the GEF. According to what is known at the moment, France is not a stakeholder as a government in the advisory group set up by UN Women to ensure accountability, even though it co-chaired the Forum. Furthermore, the French GEF secretariat has not existed formally since September and has not been renewed. The lack of human resources is mentioned as a possible explanation for this apparent rapid disengagement. Should we see it as a lack of political will?

The GEF was a "necessary but insufficient"<sup>246</sup> gamble. However, it is clear that French diplomacy has taken up the task. We can hope that this French piloting will continue, otherwise the GEF will remain an "abstract act"<sup>247</sup>. Feminist civil society as a whole fears that the GEF was only a place for speeches masking national policies that are harmful to women and serve to undo their concern about UN blockades.

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245 Interview with Nicolas Rainaud, Equipop's international advocacy manager and member of the High Council for Equality, conducted on 28 October 2021

246 *Ibid.*

247 *Ibid.* 246.

# Conclusion

It seems particularly clear that health, political and institutional context in which the Generation Equality Forum was held did not facilitate its establishment. This major global meeting on gender equality, which is not widely publicized, is based on a multipartite and multisectoral approach and is intended to be the expression of a renewed multilateralism. The Forum's six coalitions for action, while disparate, have produced commitments reflecting the growing power of the private and philanthropic sectors. However, none of the voices of the GEF stakeholders were unanimous. The full representation of each sector, public and private, did not really materialize, despite a broad call for mobilization by the French and Mexican diplomatic networks. The

\$40 billion in pledged financial commitments, an unprecedented amount invested in the fight for gender equality, remain heterogeneous in their quantification, and the real difficulty lies in the accountability of these commitments for which no plan has yet been established by UN Women.

The hybrid format of this Forum, which was UN-like without being so, thus highlighted a two-speed world in which some States are fully committed, and others are absent, such as those in the Asian and Middle Eastern regions. Similarly, intergenerationality, the Forum's flagship concept, made it possible to bring together feminists of yesterday and tomorrow within the limits of relatively consensual subjects. Thus, intersectionality, prostitution and LGBTI+ issues could not find a window of dialogue in the debates and commitments.

Like the Beijing Conference and Platform for Action, the most important thing will not be the Forum itself, but the aftermath of the Generation Equality Forum: will the promises materialize? There is no doubt that civil society and especially youth will be watching very closely to see if the commitments made at the Forum are actually implemented,

## ■ Conclusion

as expressed by the young Zambian activist Yande Banda: "You say that you are going to build a gender transformative future for people, we say: show us!"<sup>248</sup>

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248 Remarks from the opening ceremony of the Generation Equality Forum, 30 June 2021.

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## Conferences and discussions at the GEF

Discussion "Defending and Claiming Women's Rights in the Context of Shrinking Civic Space and Growing Extremism", June 30, 2021 at 11:40 a.m. on the GEF platform, with Zubaida Akbar (Afghanistan), Razan El Moghrabi (Libya), Shiva Nazar Ahari (Iran), Marlyn Tadros (Egypt)

Discussion on "Women's Action for Climate Justice", FGE, with Grethel Aguilar, Carlos Alvarado Quesada, Inger Andersen, Joanita Ba-

birye, Kehkashan Basu, Anita Bhatia, Bridget Burns, David Choquenhuca, Angie Dazé, Olga Djanaeva, Patricia Espinosa, Gilbert F. Hounbo, Mithika Mwenda, Noelene Nabulivou, Naomi Nyamweya, Nohora Quiquantar, Odile Renaud-Basso, Jan Beagle, Suzanne Biegel

Informal feminist debriefing on 26 July 2021, organised by Outright, CREA and AWID

Julie Cissé, Laura Cook, Abdul Ghafoor Mohammed, Yannick Glemarec, Jeannette Gurung, Anne Heloise, Raquel Lagunas, Regan Pritzker, Maria Reyes, Mary Robinson, 2 July 2021

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Remarks by Kamala Harris, Vice President of the United States of America, at the opening ceremony of the Forum

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## Hearings

Interview with Fabrice Ferrier, Managing Director of Focus 2030, and Caroline de Crémoux, program Manager for Focus 2030, on 21 October 2021.

Interview with Nicolas Rainaud, Equipop's international advocacy manager and member of the High Council for Equality, conducted on 28 October 2021

Interview with Virginie Poupene, freelance gender and development expert conducted on October 4, 2021

## International Conventions

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## Videos

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