

Response to the 2022 G7 Leaders' Communique from the Gender and Development Network

As the world continues to reel from the ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, last year's promises by G7 leaders to "Build Back Better" are quickly dissipating. As echoed in this year's Women 7 (W7) [Communique](#), escalating levels of global inequality are eroding hard-won gains on gender equality, and it is women – particularly those who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination – who have been hit the hardest.

That these challenges are at least partially recognised in this year's [G7 Leaders' Communique](#) is thus welcome, with calls for a gender-equal global recovery and clear recognition of the importance of women's paid and unpaid care work. Under the leadership of the German Presidency, there is also a more developed understanding of gender equality, and the structural barriers faced by women in all their diversity, along with mention of feminist development, foreign and trade policies. This Communique is certainly a step in the right direction.

But the real challenge comes with implementation and here the Communique falls short – failing to commit to public investment in care infrastructure or to support new measures on vaccine equity, debt cancellation or progressive global taxation.

Below, we have outlined some of the language of G7 Leaders as it relates to the promotion of gender equality and women's rights, and outline gaps in key areas of international cooperation. Finally, some of the relevant language from the Development and Employment Ministers' Communiques have also been included.

What the G7 Leaders' Communique says, and doesn't say, on gender equality

1. Gender Equality

Under the German Presidency, the analysis and understanding of gender equality has developed since previous G7s, including recognition of the structural barriers that women - in all their diversity - face.

"Achieving gender equality is imperative as we strive for resilient, inclusive democratic societies, and to counter the rising tide of authoritarianism and backlash against women's and girls' rights

across the globe. We reaffirm our full commitment to a sustained focus on realising equality between women and men as well as transgender and non-binary people, and to ensuring that everyone – independent of their gender identity or expression or sexual orientation – has the same opportunities and is protected against discrimination and violence. To this end, we commit to redoubling our efforts to overcome longstanding structural barriers and to addressing harmful gender norms, stereotypes, roles, and practices. We seek to ensure full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in all their diversity as well as LGBTIQ+ persons in politics, economics, education and all other spheres of society, and to consistently mainstream gender equality into all policy areas” (Page 23).

Commitments to support these aspirations are backed by funding intentions - although these are vague.

“As we strive to tackle the global challenges of our time, we recognise that they are far from gender-neutral and are determined to address their gendered impacts. We commit to make every effort to collectively increase the share of G7’s bilateral allocable ODA advancing gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment over the coming years” (Page 24).

The German Presidency has made a major advance in its focus on care throughout the G7 deliberations, and at the [G7 Conference on Care](#). Recognition of the central role that care plays in the functioning of our societies and economies, so starkly demonstrated during the pandemic, is very welcome. The G7 Leaders’ Communique states:

“The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected women and girls and has highlighted the essential role of care work – both paid and unpaid – for the functioning of our societies and economies, but also as a key cause of gender inequalities due to its unequal distribution. It is of paramount importance to recognise, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work, and to reward paid care work adequately, guaranteeing care workers representation. To that end, we will support efforts to expand global access to quality childcare infrastructure including through our collective support of USD 79 million for the Childcare Incentive Fund, thereby improving women’s economic empowerment, child outcomes, family welfare, and overall economic growth” (Page 24).

However, promised contributions to the World Bank’s [Child Care Incentive Fund](#) are a partial response, focusing only on childcare and with an objective of enabling women to return to the labour force, rather than promoting their rights. The systemic undervaluing and underfunding of the wider care economy revealed during the pandemic [requires](#) a commitment to public investment in health and care services and social protection. The W7 Communique echoes calls, including from the 2021 [Gender Equality Advisory Council](#), for an additional investment in social infrastructure of two percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Reaffirmed commitment to sexual and reproductive health and rights (Page 24) is also important in the light of the current global backlash, although neither abortion nor comprehensive sexuality education were specifically mentioned.

2. Global economic recovery

Global economic recovery remains a major focus for the G7 Leaders. It is therefore a positive development that gender equality is clearly centred within global economic recovery, particularly the need to remove structural barriers, although the goals should be to achieve women's rights per se, not just as a means towards economic success:

"We continue to strive for a strong, sustainable, balanced, gender-equal, and inclusive global recovery" (Page 8).

...we recognise the importance of diversity and that the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and under-represented groups is crucial for the long term success of our economies. This includes the need to remove structural barriers to gender equality, including through inclusive and supportive economic and fiscal policy frameworks" (Page 8).

3. Investment in sustainable infrastructure

Commitment to investment in 'Sustainable Infrastructure' across the globe is welcome,

"...we have further shaped and implemented our Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) as a joint offer to narrow the investment gap for sustainable, inclusive, climate resilient, and quality infrastructure in emerging markets and developing countries..." (Page 15).

However, the PGII falls short in two ways. Firstly, there is an overemphasis on private investment. Despite the reaffirmation of commitment to Agenda 2030 (page 16) the limitations of private investment in achieving equity goals are not mentioned.

Secondly, it is disappointing that the Communique does not specifically mention investment in care or social infrastructure, particularly given the statements made on Pages 8 and 24 in relation to Gender Equality (expanded on above). Indeed, US [communications](#) suggested that the new 'Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment' recognises the importance of investment in care infrastructure. In particular, it stated: *"Advancing gender equality and equity—from care infrastructure that increases opportunities for economic participation by women, to improved water and sanitation infrastructure that addresses gender gaps in unpaid work and time use – in order to boost the global economic recovery by ensuring that half the population is not forced to sit on the sidelines."*

As part of the measures needed on the care economy, however, we welcome the reaffirmation of the importance of social protection: *"We emphasise the value of social protection, particularly in times of crises and in the face of climate change and environmental degradation, and underscore the human right to social security"* (Page 12). We urge governments to accelerate funding of gender transformative social protection schemes.

Decent work for women, including those working in the care sector, will also need to be an important part of global economic recovery. This will need to be addressed as part of the new Working Group established: *"To promote continuity and prioritise coordinated action across the*

G7 on critical labour, social, and employment issues, we will establish a standing Employment Working Group within the G7” (Page 12).

4. A feminist foreign, development and trade policy

GADN welcomes the G7’s commitment to move towards a feminist foreign, development and trade policy.

“In the spirit of feminist development, foreign and trade policies and to empower women and girls, we will strengthen the rights, resources and opportunities for women and girls in all their diversity in every sphere” (Page 17).

We look forward to G7 governments putting this rhetoric into practice with a foreign, development and trade policy that does the following,

- Promotes rights, equality and wellbeing – for all – not just women, and recognising the intersecting discriminations based on class, gender, race and other forms of oppression;
- Recognises and commits to promotion of gender equality as an objective in its own right – not justified by its benefit to wider society and the economy;
- Understands power structures - removes the structural barriers created by patriarchy and acknowledges the damage of colonialism and its continuing legacy in every aspect of life, and the need for decolonisation and reparations;
- Aligns feminist foreign policy principles across the policy agendas pursuing a Peace and Security agenda, and ecological and economic justice globally, promoting sustainability and equality between and within countries; Supports tangible commitments with appropriate funding.

The G7 Leaders’ Communique continues to fall short on key areas of international cooperation

1. Vaccine Equity

In the third year of the global pandemic, only [17.8 per cent](#) of people in low-income countries have received one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine. The G7 Leaders’ Communique states:

“To overcome the COVID-19 pandemic now, we reaffirm our commitment to enabling equitable global access to and delivery of safe, effective, quality-assured and affordable vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics, and other essential medical goods” (Page 12).

However, for G7 Leaders, this continues to be limited to increasing their donations of Covid-19 vaccines instead of giving countries in the Global South the powers to manufacture their own. To this end, G7 countries have refused to give their full support for the originally proposed [TRIPS Waiver](#). Instead, as witnessed in the World Trade Organisation [deal](#) agreed earlier this month, G7 Leaders - in particular the UK - have used their powers to thwart efforts for global vaccine equity by continuing to prioritise the interests of pharmaceutical giants over health for all, during an ongoing global public health emergency.

2. Tackling unsustainable levels of global debt

Even before the pandemic, many countries across the Global South were experiencing unsustainable levels of debt and this has only intensified since 2020, with additional global pressures mounting. This was acknowledged in the G7 Leaders' Communique:

“Given the deteriorating and highly challenging debt situations of many developing countries and emerging markets – with more than half of low-income countries in debt distress or at high risk of debt distress – we recognise the urgency of improving the multilateral frameworks for debt restructuring and to address debt vulnerabilities” (Page 8-9).

However, instead of supporting a new debt workout mechanism, G7 Leaders have continued to back the G20's [Common Framework](#) for Debt Treatments beyond the Debt Service Suspension Initiative. Critically, the Common Framework has failed to bring private creditors to the table and, to date, no country has been able to successfully apply for the scheme. The [main call from global debt justice communities](#) continues to be, as an immediate step, the unconditional cancellation of public external debt payments by all lenders – bilateral, multilateral and private – for all countries in need, for at least the next four years, and a clear programme towards the unconditional cancellation of outstanding debt.

3. A G7 global tax deal that does not benefit all countries equally

Last year, G7 Finance Ministers reached a [historic deal](#) on taxing multinational corporations a global minimum corporate tax rate. [Criticisms](#) about the deal included that the proposal would not generate enough revenue, that the benefits to low-income countries would be limited and that it undermined existing calls for a more democratic tax body under the auspices of the United Nations. This year's G7 has not acknowledged or attempted to address these shortcomings and instead has vowed to provide support for its implementation to developing countries.

4. The Climate Crisis

This year, G7 Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement and to limit global warming to 1.5°C. However, reaching these globally agreed targets requires international cooperation and financial support to countries in the Global South for their climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. A sum of USD 100bn was pledged by rich nations at COP15 in 2009 but this failed to materialise by the 2020 target. With COP27 convening in a few short months, G7 Leaders have still not made any concrete plans for delivering on this collective USD100bn climate finance mobilisation goal. Instead, what has been launched by the German G7 Presidency is a [Climate Club](#) - an intergovernmental forum for countries that are “...committed to the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and the decisions thereunder, in particular the Glasgow Climate Pact” (Page 2). While increased international cooperation on the climate crisis is much needed – especially among countries in the Global North – the Climate Club will need to be more than just a “talking shop” to deliver concrete actions.

What other G7 Communiqués say on gender equality

Development Ministers' Communiqué

As part of a dedicated section on Gender Equality, for the first time G7 Development Ministers collectively endorsed 'the spirit of a feminist development policy':

"In the spirit of a feminist development policy our external actions should increasingly target equity and equality of all genders and sexual identities so as to overcome the gender-unequal burden of paid and unpaid care work and the exclusion of LGBTIQ+ persons; and to end harmful gender norms notably in and through education and the protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and by addressing the particular needs of girls, adolescent girls and women in conflict, crisis and displacement" (Paragraph 19).

Commitments on bilateral aid were promising in showing more understanding of the need for transformative approaches, although still vague in terms of actual commitments. The 2X Challenge was also highlighted despite concerns about the challenges of private financing for achieving equity goals:

"Now is the moment to join all forces to leverage resources for gender equality and women's empowerment. We commit to make every effort to collectively increase the share of the G7's bilateral allocable ODA advancing gender equality and women's empowerment over the coming years. We will track our performance using the OECD DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker. We aim to enhance the gender equality impact of our aid activities by increasingly implementing gender transformative approaches.Furthermore, we will strengthen our efforts to mobilize additional private resources for gender equity and equality and women's empowerment. Welcoming the ambition and success of the 2X Challenge, we recognize and emphasize the importance of gender-lens investing to SDG financing" (Paragraph 20).

Recognition of the importance of care displayed a much more holistic understanding of the care economy than at previous G7s, with mention of paid care work and the need for care workers representation and collective bargaining, although not yet of public services:

"The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated the unequal and gendered distribution and the general undervaluing of paid and unpaid care work. Women and girls in all their diversity carry out a disproportionate share of paid and unpaid care work. We are concerned that this constitutes an obstacle to sustainable development, gender equality as well as economic empowerment of all women and girls. We highlight the need to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care; reward care workers fairly, while generating sufficient care jobs to meet the demand for care; and give care workers representation in social dialogue and collective bargaining as detailed in the ILO's Framework for Decent Care Work. Therefore, we will develop and share best practices for addressing care work and will strengthen the care economy in partner countries, including through the Global Alliance for Care as members or associated partners" (Paragraph 21).

Commitments on LGBTIQ+ were also welcome:

“LGBTIQ+ persons are strongly affected by sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), persecution, social exclusion, poverty and discrimination. The COVID19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges for LGBTIQ+ persons. As the G7, we commit to taking an active role in tackling all these multiple and intersecting forms of violence and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons” (Paragraph 22).

The language on girls’ education was more transformative than last year:

“We will contribute to more resilient, inclusive, gender transformative education systems by ending structural barriers and harmful gender norms, stereotypes, roles and practices, which remain a pervasive threat to global achievements in gender equality, health, and empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity and their rights to quality education” (Paragraph 23).

Conflict related sexual violence was highlighted, particularly in relation to Ukraine

“..... conflicts, violence and humanitarian crises and their consequences are not gender neutral: women and children, especially girls, and those marginalized based on their sexual orientation or gender identity in conflict, crisis and displacement are particularly vulnerable to exacerbated forms of sexual and gender-based violence, and exposed to a heightened risk of sexual exploitation and abuse as well as human trafficking. At the same time they are severely underrepresented in most meaningful decision-making roles in peace and political processes. The safety of women peacebuilders, frontline humanitarian responders and human rights defenders worldwide is under growing threat. We acknowledge the specific needs, challenges and potentials of women in conflict and displacement as agents of change. In close alignment with the Women Peace and Security Agenda, we commit to intensifying our efforts to secure their full, equal, effective and meaningful participation in social, economic and political decision-making as well as conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes, including by supporting the Action Network on Forced Displacement and its aims. We further commit to supporting projects that promote the full, equal, effective and meaningful participation of women in contexts of displacement, conflict and migration, politically or financially,.....” (Paragraph 24).

Employment Ministers’ Communique

The provision of decent work, mentioned in the G7 Leaders’ Communique, was also elaborated on by Employment Ministers:

“We agree that it is important to monitor the creation of decent work and good quality jobs that are contributing to a green, nature-positive economy and a just transition. We ask the OECD and the ILO to develop a methodology and definition to do this, including for identifying the quality for these jobs, sectors and worker characteristics. In doing so, the ILO and OECD should take into account relevant existing definitions and frameworks in coordination with relevant stakeholders” (Paragraph 4).

Strengthening universal social protection was also included:

“We emphasize that the “right of everyone to social security, including social insurance” is a human right, enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations (1966), which the social protection systems of the States Parties should progressively realise. We reaffirm the principles set out in ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation No. 202 and the ILO Global Call to Action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis of June 2021” (Paragraph 8)

“We emphasize the value of universal and adequate social protection systems in general and even more so in times of crises, pandemics, aggravated inequalities and increasing climate change and environmental degradation” (Paragraph 9).

Historic support for an internationally binding instrument on business and human rights was also part of the Employment Ministers’ Communique:

“In cooperation with relevant ministries, we are committed to working towards an international consensus on business and human rights to strengthen compliance with these standards, including through, but not limited to, mandatory measures, that...effectively protect rights-holders, in particular those at heightened risk of vulnerability or marginalization, and bear in mind the different risks that may be faced by women and men [and] provide for greater multilateral cooperation to address instances of abuse in global value chains, share information, and support effective remedy” (Paragraph 19).

Gender Equality Advisory Council

Clearly, this year, the G7’s efforts to meaningfully address systemic gender injustice have been hampered by the failure to formally establish and engage with a Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC) – a precedent that has been set and maintained since 2018. We trust that a GEAC will be in place before the end of the German G7 Presidency and that it will endorse the W7 Communique as part of its recommendations.

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