

## **Response to the 2023 G7 Leaders' Communique from the Gender and Development Network**

The 2023 [G7 Leaders' Communique](#), out on May 21, included some positive language on gender equality, however, it was light on action and funding commitments. Moreover, the newly introduced '[nexus approach](#)' to mainstreaming gender equality appears to be of limited value. There was, however, some useful language in Communiques from several Ministerial groups, listed below.

After the 2022 [G7 Leaders' Communique](#), the Gender and Development Network (GADN) [acknowledged](#) that the leaders had at least partially recognised the ways in which global challenges of escalating levels of global inequality are eroding hard-won gains on gender equality and that it is women – particularly those who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination – who have been hit the hardest. In the face of these persistent challenges, the 2023 [W7 Communique](#) included a call for: “*the G7 Leaders to commit to policies that build an equal, just, and peaceful future in a sustainable manner that firmly places gender equality and women's rights including those of various SOGIESC [sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics] at its core and take immediate, robust, and transformative actions to deliver on its commitments with tangible resources*”.

### **The 2023 G7 Leaders' Communique**

Below, we outline what the 2023 G7 Leaders' Communique says on some core issues related to gender equality and women's rights.

#### **Gender equality – overview**

The document preamble includes the commitment that:  
*“We will champion international principles and shared values by....promoting universal human rights, gender equality and human dignity”.*

In a number of places, the document also makes welcome reference to the need for “gender-transformative” interventions. For example, it says: “*We will accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), and will do so in a comprehensive and gender-transformative manner including through locally-led development.*” (Paragraph 11)

However, the language and commitment included in last year's G7 Leaders' Communique on moving towards a feminist foreign, development, and, trade policy is not repeated this year. We would have liked this to have progressed this year with commitments to Feminist Foreign Policies

that:

- Promote rights, equality and wellbeing – for all – not just women, and recognising the intersecting discriminations based on class, gender, race and other forms of oppression;
- Recognise and commits to the promotion of gender equality as an objective in its own right – not justified by its benefit to wider society and the economy;
- Understand 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;
- Align 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.

## Section on Gender

Under the section entitled 'gender' there is some good language for example, in relation to tackling structural barriers to gender equality, as well as resisting attempts to rollback women's rights, and in later paragraphs, this continues in relation to other specific areas. However, there were no financial commitments made. Continuing recognition of the importance of care has not led to further action, but hopefully paves the way for more concrete responses in the coming years. (Emphasis in bold added by GADN).

*“Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is fundamental for a resilient, fair, and prosperous society. We endeavor to work with all segments of society to ensure full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in all their diversity as well as LGBTQIA+ persons in politics, economics, education and all other spheres of society, and to consistently mainstream gender equality in all policy areas. In this respect, we commit to redoubling our efforts to overcome longstanding structural barriers and to addressing harmful gender norms, stereotypes, roles, and practices through such means as education and achieve a society where diversity, human rights and dignity are respected, promoted and protected and all people can enjoy vibrant lives free from violence and discrimination independent of gender identity or expression or sexual orientation.”* (Paragraph 42)

**“We express our strong concern about the rollback of women’s and girls’ rights in particular in time of crisis and we strongly condemn all violations and abuses of human rights and fundamental freedoms for women and girls and LGBTQIA+ people around the world.** We further recognize the essential and transformative role of comprehensive SRHR in gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment, and in supporting diversity, including of sexual orientations and gender identities. We reaffirm our full commitment to achieving comprehensive SRHR for all, including by addressing access to safe and legal abortion and post abortion care. **We are committed to championing, advancing and defending gender equality and the rights of women and girls in all their diversity, at home and abroad, and will work together to thwart attempts to undermine and reverse hard-won progress in this area.** In this regard, we commit to advancing, implementing and strengthening the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda including its application to disaster risk reduction (DRR), through partnership with the WPS-Focal Points Network and support for National Action Plan development, and to promote intersectional approaches. We highlight the leading role of women in preventing violent conflict, delivering relief and recovery efforts, and forging lasting peace, and pledge to champion the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace and political processes. We commit to strengthening our efforts to eliminate conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, and the importance of providing comprehensive support and meaningful participation for victims and survivors, using a survivor centered approach. We further commit to eliminating all forms of sexual and gender-based harassment and abuse both offline and online

*as well as aid-related sexual exploitation and abuse. We are committed to ensuring the right to education for all, and emphasize the importance of promoting equitable access to safe, gender-transformative quality education as well as to taking measures to close the gender gap in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) sectors and education, and close the gender digital gap. We see this as key to promote women’s entrepreneurship, which is an essential building block to address the climate, nature and development challenges. We also commit to promoting reskilling and upskilling, fostering decent work conditions, strengthening financial inclusion of women in all their diversity, and eliminating the gender pay gap. We further reiterate our commitments to promoting women’s full empowerment as well as their full and equal participation in decision-making processes at all levels, including in leadership positions. We recognize that quality care plays an essential role in the functioning of our societies and economies, but is a key cause of gender inequalities due to its gender unequal distribution.”* (Paragraph 43)

### **Mainstreaming and the ‘nexus approach’**

Achieving gender equality and the rights of women and girls requires both strong standalone policies with a specific gender focus and the integration of a gender analysis across all areas of policy. While the Communique makes note of the need to advance commitments through gender mainstreaming using a ‘nexus approach’, in practice, this is very superficial and provides no real new policy framework. While the repeated commitment in relation to increasing the share of bilateral aid that advances gender equality is welcome, it still contains no actual target.

*“To advance our commitments, we emphasize the need to overcome the fragmentation and marginalization of gender equality issues by enhancing our efforts to integrate and deepening gender mainstreaming for a substantial transformation of our societies. In this regard, we call for a continuous, holistic and comprehensive approach to promote gender equality by creating a “nexus” that bridges the political and security, economic and social spheres and advocate for maximizing the efficiency and the impact of multi-sectorial policies and of our actions across diverse dimensions of policy implementation. We stress the importance of such a nexus approach in our foreign and sustainable development policy and in our ODA and endeavor to support the nexus. We reaffirm our commitment to make every effort to collectively increase the share of our bilateral allocable ODA advancing gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment over the coming years. In this regard, we welcome “the Fact Sheet: Promoting Gender Mainstreaming through the nexus approach” made by our experts and look forward to further progress in this area.”* (Paragraph 44)

Accompanying the Leaders’ Communique is the [G7 Fact Sheet Promoting Gender Mainstreaming through the Nexus Approach](#). The ‘nexus approach’ essentially calls for the mainstreaming of gender equality across all policy areas, something that would not doubt be useful. *“G7 members believe that such a comprehensive approach is needed to further promote gender mainstreaming, and maximize the impact of gender equality policies and actions. G7 members emphasize the effectiveness of the nexus approach, in particular, among in the political/security, economic and social spheres to address gender inequalities in the world.”* (Page 2).

However, there seem to be no new commitments or approaches, just a list of work and initiatives that are already underway. It is notable that among the specific examples given of the ‘nexus approach’, the mainstreaming of gender into global economic or trade policies is not included. In relation to economic policy, the examples given of action are limited. They refer to existing initiatives on women’s economic empowerment and financing support for women entrepreneurs, which while of benefit to some women do not address the structural barriers the majority of women face in achieving economic justice. Also listed are investment in the World Bank’s Childcare Incentive Fund and donor membership in the Global Alliance for Care – essentially an

information sharing network. A genuine 'nexus approach' would need to see gender-transformative initiatives in relation to core economic and trade policy, foreign policy, and climate responses for example.

## The Global Economy

Post COVID-19 and in light of ensuing global economic crises, GADN was hoping for strong language on the need for a just, equitable and sustainable economic recovery. However, G7 leaders have returned to an instrumentalist approach to women's role in the economy saying: "*We also stress the crucial role of women and under-represented groups for the long-term success of our economies through promoting inclusion, diversity and innovation.*" (Paragraph 7)

Achieving gender equality requires funds for public services and the avoidance of austerity measures which have so frequently been shown to hit women hardest. New agreements on debt relief that covered private creditors and included cancellation of the sovereign debts of the most debt-distressed countries had therefore been called for by many [civil society organisations](#). However, in Paragraph 12, the Communique repeats commitments already made over the last three years that have not resulted in positive outcomes.

## Labour

The section on labour includes some positive language on the importance of freedom of association and collective bargaining, both of which are essential for women's economic justice. The final sentence of Paragraph 36 on care is also a helpful framing to prompt concrete action in the coming years. (Emphasis in bold added by GADN).

*"We emphasize that **freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining play an important role in promoting decent work** and wage growth. We are resolved to build an inclusive labor market that ensures decent and good quality jobs for all and leaves no one behind, especially, women and under-represented groups, including persons with disabilities, older persons and youth, while engaging constructively with social partners and other stakeholders. We also work towards quality job creation, universal access to social protection, and further improving gender equality in the labor market. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected women and girls, and has highlighted the unequal distribution of care work as a key cause of gender inequalities, while showing the essential role paid and unpaid care work plays in the functioning of our societies and economies. We commit to addressing underlying discriminatory social and gender norms, such as unequal sharing of paid and unpaid care-work and housework, promoting and protecting social security including parental leave, providing support for childcare and other field of care work and care economy, including by facilitating access to infrastructures and long term care. In particular, we reaffirm the need to support and promote parenthood protection to ensure parents can combine work and family and personal life and actively contribute to all spheres of our society. **We also 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.**" (Paragraph 36)*

## What other G7 Statements and Ministerial Communiques say on gender equality

### [G7 Senior Development Officials \(SDOs\) Chair Summary](#)

As a step back from last year's dedicated section on Gender Equality as part of the G7 Development Ministers' Communique, this year's Chair Summary from the G7 Senior

Development Officials meeting stated:

*“SDOs stressed that gender-mainstreaming is a cross-cutting issue and recognized the need for further promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity including LGBTQIA+ protections more than ever, given its central role in achieving the SDGs, and the rollback of women’s and girls’ rights due to the pandemic and other crises. They took special note of the grave situation of Afghan women and girls and they condemned the oppression and systematic exclusion they are facing in political, social and economic spheres, including through severe restrictions on their rights and freedoms such as access to education, employment, freedom of movement and freedom of choice, the rights to association and peaceful assembly and participation in public life.” (Paragraph 33)*

*“SDOs stressed the importance of promoting comprehensive SRHR and maternal, newborn, adolescent as well as child health and wellbeing, including access to safe abortion and post-abortion care and of working together to end the preventable deaths of mothers, babies and children by 2030. SDOs also expressed their determination to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda by enhancing support for all, including women and girls in all their diversity who are among some of the most vulnerable in conflict affected or fragile countries, including through providing support for survivors of conflict related sexual violence, reducing and mitigating the harmful effects of gender-based violence through concrete action, and enhancing disaster resilience of women and girls in all their diversity. SDOs also expressed support to women’s economic empowerment, including addressing gender wage gaps, promoting the recognition of the care economy, and protection and advancement of all women’s and girls’ rights. SDOs acknowledged that gender equality requires fair distribution of financial resources and recognizing the importance of gender-lens investment.” (Paragraph 34)*

*“SDOs also recalled the commitment that G7 Leaders made in 2022 to make every effort to collectively increase the share of G7’s bilateral allocable ODA advancing gender equality, and the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity, over the coming years. In this regard, they called for enhancing a “nexus” among key gender-related policies and actions, in particular among political, security, economic and social spheres, with coherence, comprehensiveness and continuity.” (Paragraph 35)*

### **Climate, Energy and Environment Ministers’ Communique**

This year’s G7 Climate, Energy, and, Environment Ministers’ Communique contained a dedicated section on gender equality:

*“Gender equality: We place gender and LGBTQIA+ equity at the heart of our efforts to tackle the triple crisis and to accelerate clean energy transition. We acknowledge with concern that women and girls are often disproportionately affected by the impacts of the triple crisis, and recognize their critical role as leaders and agents of change. We commit to accumulate further knowledge on these impacts and to address them in partnership with women and girls, and call for the collection and use of more sex-disaggregated data*

*in support of this. We recognize that taking all appropriate measures for the empowerment of women and girls as well as LGBTQIA+ persons contributes to creating an innovative and inclusive workforce, equipped with the knowledge and skills needed for tackling the triple crisis and clean energy transition. We are committed to their full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership at all levels of action, engagement, policy and decision making related to climate, energy and environment issues.” (Paragraph 21)*

### **Foreign Ministers’ Communique**

This year’s Foreign Ministers’ Communique contained a dedicated section on gender equality including language on LGBTQI rights and on ‘rollback’ but does not include last year’s proposals to build on ‘feminist’ approaches in foreign policy:

*“We reaffirm the G7’s continued global leadership on gender equality and the promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls in all their diversity as well as LGBTQIA+ persons. We express our strong concern over the global rollback of women’s and girls’ rights in particular and the disproportionate impact of conflict and crisis on them. We are committed to the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related and technologically-facilitated sexual violence. We underscore the importance of ensuring the full empowerment of women, as well as their full, equal and meaningful participation in all political and peace processes. We recognize the importance of advancing gender-responsive climate action, closing the digital gender gap, strengthening and formalizing the care economy, and breaking down gender barriers in education. We reaffirm our commitment to implementing the global WPS agenda in accordance with UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions.” (Paragraph 23)*

### **Labour and Employment Ministers’ Declaration**

#### **Gender Equality**

This year’s Labour and Employment Ministers’ Declaration contained a dedicated section on gender equality:

*“Accelerating gender equality: We are committed to fully support the Gender Equality Advisory Council and its G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps, making sure to update its methodology and indicators considering the constant evolution and persistent challenges. We recognize that gender gaps in labour market opportunities and outcomes still exist, such as the gender pay gap, occupational segregation and stereotypical views about gender roles especially at higher management levels. We recognize that women experiencing intersectional inequalities are even more vulnerable in the world of work. In order to promote gender equality, it is important to ensure all women’s voices are heard by enhancing their leadership and participation in decision-making processes, including through social dialogue, and by eliminating unconscious bias and discrimination by individuals and enterprises. Furthermore, we acknowledge the importance of encouraging women’s entrepreneurship including non-discriminative access to financing. It is also important to enhance women’s access to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) training and education by, for example, increasing access to and funding for programs in these areas. We put an emphasis on establishing a working model that enables parents both to work and raise a family in a diverse and flexible manner including by strengthening childcare. We are committed to promoting the take-up of men’s parental and*

*care leave working closely with employers. In addition, we stress the importance of long-term care leave and access to inclusive and quality care options as well as addressing social norms that underpin women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care work. (Paragraph 17)*

*We also underline the importance of promoting measures to prevent and respond to harassment and violence against all workers, especially to gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work. In addition, we should also encourage gender balance in all sectors, decent working conditions, and equal pay for equal work or work of equal value. We commit to cooperating closely with engagement groups on matters within their activities to further improve gender equality in the labour market. We acknowledge that intersecting factors such as gender, age, and disability result in even greater barriers to workforce participation and reiterate our commitment to an inclusive labour market.” (Paragraph 18)*

### **Care work**

The Declaration stressed the importance of care and mentioned addressing the underlying social norms that lead to women's immense share of unpaid care work and recognised the need to consider underpaid as well as unpaid work. However, Ministers failed to acknowledge care as a 'public good' and thus the crucial role governments ought to play in the provision of care and other public services.

*“On the whole, the pandemic disproportionately negatively affected people across G7 economies based on gender, age, education and income levels, racial or ethnic origin, disability and migration status, sexual orientation or gender identity, and other factors. Women who took on the major burden of unpaid care work have particularly suffered from the pandemic, including career setbacks in some cases due to the COVID-19 containment policies. This has often led to a standstill and partial inversion in the development of female labour market participation, wages and job quality as well as negative effects on their pensions and balanced representation. In this context, and respecting the role of the social partners, we are committed to promoting appropriate improvements in working conditions, including real wage growth in line with productivity growth, the improvement of working environments for all, and providing adequate support for those with care responsibilities. We will continue to invest in the care economy to alleviate the burden of unpaid care work, ensure decent work and improve working conditions for those who perform paid care work.” (Paragraph 9)*

*“Promoting high quality care-related jobs: Care work is essential for human well-being and sustainable economic growth but remains under-recognized and undervalued. Care-related jobs, which were at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic, are often characterised by poor working conditions including low wages, which results in a shortage of care workers in many countries. As women make up a large share of the care workforce, the low pay and poor working conditions that characterize the sector are factors that can contribute to labour market gender inequality. It is necessary to enhance the quality of care jobs by improving working conditions such as wages, health and safety including prevention of long working hours, career progression and development, access to social protection, professionalization, skill development, and credentialing.” (Paragraph 26)*

## Health Ministers' Communique

The Communique touched on care, in relation to the [Gender Equal Health and Care Workforce Initiative](#) to tackle gender inequity in the health sector:

*“In addition, we support the Gender Equal Health and Care Workforce Initiative, in order to tackle gender inequity and inequality in the health sector, including promoting the implementation of measures for safe and decent jobs for women, getting paid equally for work of equal value, equal and fair employment opportunities, support for the health of workers, an end to violence and harassment, and equal participation in leadership and decision making in the sector of health and care.”* (Paragraph 24)

The Health Ministerial further produced an annex, the [G7 Global Plan for universal health coverage \(UHC\) Action Agenda](#), also making links to care, particularly around strengthening the health and care workforce to deliver high-quality care (under action area 4).

In relation to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), there was some relatively progressive language:

*“We commit to taking steps collectively to ensure universal access to comprehensive health services at every stage of life, including maternal and child health and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services for all, especially including for those in vulnerable and marginalised situations. This encompasses the broadest approach to advancing comprehensive SRHR for all, including rights-based family planning supported by evidence-based methods of contraception; maternal, neonatal and child health (MNCH); menstrual health and hygiene; prevention of HIV and sexually transmitted infection (STI); comprehensive sexuality education; mental health; addressing access to safe and legal abortion and post-abortion care; care and information on sexual dysfunctions and disorders, prevention, detection and treatment; related initiatives for cancer prevention and control including vaccination against HPV; SRHR advocacy; and prevention and ending harmful practices on sexual and gender-based stigma, discrimination and violence. As part of these wider efforts to defend and promote SRHR in the face of attempted rollback, we will advocate for the inclusion of the comprehensive SRH services as an essential part of UHC at the PHC level.”* (Paragraph 35)

## Gender Equality Advisory Council

The Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC) is a group of representatives from across business, academia, and civil society appointed each year by the G7 Presidency to make proposals on gender equality to the G7 Process. This year's Council highlighted four pillars of gender equality in their recommendations: funding, education, peace building and data. Beyond those, they stressed the importance of women's leadership and their meaningful and direct involvement in every sphere.

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