

# Women's Major Group

## Women's Major Group Position Paper 2024 High Level Political Forum

### **Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions**

#### Executive Summary

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As 2024 begins, countries and populations across the globe are grappling with multiple and interlinked crises, pushing us even farther from realizing the Agenda 2030. Our rights, our bodies and our planet are in peril, and the most structurally marginalized are bearing the brunt as these crises exacerbate pre-existing inequalities.

The rise in militarism and warfare, fuelled by the interests of those holding the most power and their transnational allies, has led to widespread human rights violations and the dismantling of essential social services for basic human needs, creating new layers of vulnerability, especially for women, girls and gender-diverse people. We demand an urgent redirection of military expenditures towards social spending and accelerating efforts towards peace, disarmament, and feminist change. We call on governments to end imperialist occupation and uphold people's right to justice, self-determination and sustainable development. Governments must do more to uphold international laws and commitments created to protect our human rights including sexual and reproductive health and rights, other species and the Planet.

The world can no longer afford to ignore the flawed systems of neoliberal capitalist development and unlimited growth that prioritize private profit over people and the Planet, exacerbating the catastrophic impact of the triple planetary crisis for Global South populations. As feminist activists and human rights defenders, we urge governments of the Global South to show bold ambition, reject false solutions and demand reparative and adequate climate finance for the ecological crisis wrought by capitalist greed.

As the world recovers from the COVID-19-created economic recession, we as members of WMG urge member states to rethink and reform the international financial architecture to ensure full and sustainable socio-economic recovery in fragile countries. We demand gender transformative and pro-poor policies, equitable state and civil society participation, gender-based tax justice and

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an end to debt and conditionalities. The 2030 Agenda cannot be achieved if half of the world's population is not resourced to partner in creating, managing, and caring for our world.

We are living through an increasingly polarized world, with racism, gender discrimination, and xenophobia on the rise everywhere, undermining progress and holding our rights and equality hostage. Governments must recognize the vital work of feminist and human rights groups and make concerted efforts to shift power and decision-making to the people to lead the change they seek. We call on governments to boldly support feminist organizing by increasing social development budgets, implementing accessible, flexible, multi-year, core funding policies, and creating mechanisms to safeguard and protect activists and groups.

WMG's 2024 submission to HLPF will review all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through an intersectional lens underscoring the importance of urgent and transformative action and the need to overhaul our systems and structures to create a more equal world and halt the damage to our planet. As we urge governments and global institutions to renew their commitment towards the 2030 Agenda, we will inspire hope through stories of change, bearing witness to how the most marginalized and impacted people persevere, innovate and organize in the face of unrelenting backlash.

## Cross Cutting Pillars: Goals 5 and 17

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"Participation is a radical demand for genuine agency over decisions impacting our bodies and lives. But women's participation and quantitative representation alone are not the end goal of our movement; they are part of a broader goal of structural transformation that requires reshaping institutions to be democratic, responsive, and equal, and abolishing institutions that perpetuate oppression and marginalization." - *WILPF 2023*<sup>1</sup>

As our "shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future,"<sup>2</sup> the SDGs must include the voices of women, girls and other structurally marginalized peoples and communities. Without the meaningful participation and contributions of these groups, we risk progress against all our SDGs and targets.

The WMG has therefore always been an advocate of the interlinked nature of the SDGs and rejects any attempt towards the fragmentation of the 2030 Agenda. Targets under Goals 5 and 17 are integral to the implementation of all 17 goals and to the overall wellbeing of people and the Planet. Over the years, we have taken a comprehensive approach towards reviewing multiple goals

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<sup>1</sup> Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) comment on CEDAW discussion on women in decision making, February 2023

<sup>2</sup> UN SDG Mission Statement

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under the overarching pillars of economic, social and environmental justice with the crosscutting pillar of gender equality and increased global commitments and resources towards a more fair, just and equal world. The chapters below highlight the current state of our rights backed with statistical data and recommend actions for UN member states for implementation at international, regional, national and local levels.

## **WMG demands a feminist Pact for the Future for sustainable peace and development**

As we highlight the importance of gender equality and justice, and strengthening global partnerships for the full and sustained implementation of the 2030 Agenda, we also want to use the HLPF space to share our critique of the Summit of the Future (SOTF). Given the urgent need to meet the SDG targets, we want to acknowledge the timely relevance of SOTF as the world teeters on the edge of a polycrisis, while reiterating that it is time to move beyond rhetoric and towards real solutions and meaningful actions aimed at dismantling patriarchal and colonial systems of oppression. As feminists, activists and as people of the world directly impacted by these systemic inequalities, we are afraid that while the Pact for the Future (Pact) promises critical reforms, it threatens to divert political will and focus away from the SDGs.<sup>3</sup>

“We believe the Pact should go beyond declarations of aspiration and be a document that courageously states commitments towards profound systemic transformations underpinned by a collective reaffirmation to the UN Charter”<sup>4</sup> and a revitalization of multilateralism.

For the SOTF process to lead to a meaningful change, it needs to right the wrongs of a continuing legacy of colonial extraction and oppression which has harmed the well-being of people, nature, and animals. It must call out the failure of Member States to make good on their past commitments to international cooperation, including funding commitments to the UN. Over the last 5 years, while official development assistance (ODA) has increased in quantity<sup>5</sup>, only five countries have reached the target of allocating 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) to ODA.<sup>6</sup> There is already an increasing reliance on the private sector to fund the SDGs, leading to the corporate capture of our economies while military spending from public budgets is at an all

<sup>3</sup> WMG & Ad-hoc Gender Working Group Joint Statement, Summit of the Future Virtual Consultations, 2023

<sup>4</sup> Women's Major Group Written Inputs to the Zero Draft of the Summit of the Future, February 2024

<sup>5</sup> The increase in ODA in 2023 is mainly due to aid to Ukraine (which reached 20.5 billion dollars and represents 9% of total net ODA) and to humanitarian aid (25.9 billion, 11.6% of total net ODA) and contributions to multilateral organisations. Furthermore, only 14 of the DAC member countries have increased their ODA, while 17 have decreased it, <https://focus2030.org/Slight-increase-in-Official-Development-Assistance-in-2023>

<sup>6</sup> Focus 2030, Slight Increase in Official Development Assistance, January 2024, <https://focus2030.org/Slight-increase-in-Official-Development-Assistance-in-2023>

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time high, and big corporations continue to avoid paying taxes. “The Pact must push back against this false narrative of insufficiency of public finance.”<sup>7</sup>

The acceleration of the achievement of the SDGs cannot be realized without dismantling current patriarchal structures of power and decision-making through intentional and meaningful engagement and active participation of civil society in transformative ways. Continued meaningful engagement of civil society through strengthening, resourcing, and increasing the access of existing civil society engagement mechanisms, such as the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS) must be clearly stated at SOTF. We have also witnessed a rollback of agreed language on gender, gender equality and human rights and we reiterate that the Pact must ensure progressive language to reflect accelerated implementation of existing commitments on gender equality including SDG 5, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Agreed Conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), and the Women and Youth Peace and Security Agendas.

In accordance with WMG's Written Inputs to the Zero Draft of SOTF earlier this year, we want to highlight our concern for the Net Zero by 2050 proposal; “net zero is not real zero and it opens the door to dangerous false solutions”. The Pact must include strong/concrete commitments from developed countries to meet their existing obligations and provide climate finance to developing countries; and 'inviting' Parties is not enough. It must go further than this and recognise the impact the world's militaries have on the climate; call for an end to the exclusion of military pollution in climate agreements; and highlight disarmament and demilitarization as important aspects of climate action and environmental justice.<sup>8</sup> We need clear commitments to strengthen and transform institutions for conflict resolution, mediation and peacebuilding, including by providing them with adequate resources. This includes addressing misogyny and GBV as root causes and drivers of conflict globally, its gendered implications and expanding the implementation of the Women, Peace & Security (WPS) agenda. SOTF must recognize that militarization is a key impediment to diplomacy and peace, obliging states to immediately reduce military spending, close foreign military bases, and recognize patriarchy, colonization, militarization, and hegemonic masculinities as root causes of violence.

We also need stronger commitments for addressing digital dis- and misinformation and propaganda in conflicts and beyond, as they weaken democracies and disproportionately impact those furthest left behind. This includes education on AI-generated content, source-checking, and creating an enabling environment for an independent media.

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<sup>7</sup> Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Written Input for Preparation of Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future, <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sof-womens-int-league-peace-input-zero-draft-pact-for-future.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> WILPF, Written Input for Preparation of Zero Draft of the Pact

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Additionally, while we recognize the need to strengthen digital cooperation and harness the potential of science, technology, and innovation, SOTF must go beyond addressing the “digital divide” and tackle the underlying wealth divide, development divide, and gender divide. Concentration of power in a handful of big digital and tech companies must end to ensure that technologies serve as tools of development for the most marginalized, rather than maintaining the status quo or concentrating resources and profits in the hands of the few.<sup>9</sup>

Lastly, we also want to highlight that the “post World War II consensus has collapsed because of the refusal of the permanent members of the Security Council (SC) to uphold the Charter” and “we have normalized the use of violence and armed conflict as a means of dispute resolution, undermining the promise of the Charter”.<sup>10</sup> An urgent transformation of the multilateral system is imperative. While we wait for the full text of the SC reform, we raise serious concern about the Secretary-General convening a biennial summit of Group of 20 (G20) and international financial institutions (IFIs). Such an exclusive biennial summit runs counter to the spirit of democratizing IFI governance and giving developing countries a stronger voice in reform initiatives and will put the voices of G20 front and center.

## Gender equality today

According to current trends, it will take an estimated 300 years to end child marriage, 286 years to close gaps in legal protection and repeal discriminatory laws, 268 years to close the economic gender gap<sup>11</sup>, 140 years for women to be represented equally in positions of power and leadership in the workplace, and 47 years to achieve equal representation in national parliaments.<sup>12</sup> All in all, it will take us another 131 years to reach gender parity.<sup>13</sup>

These numbers are alarming! The urgency to act is clear with multiple global and protracted crises exacerbating setbacks, projecting alarming timelines for achieving critical sustainable development milestones. What we need right now is putting words into action and boldly funding feminist movements in all their diversity. Without full and complete gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, and an expansive and feminist undertaking of our promises, we will continue to remain behind on our 2030 targets for sustainable development, all the while destroying our planet and its resources, as well as perpetuating systemic and structural barriers that oppress all marginalized people everywhere.

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<sup>9</sup> APWLD, CSO Collective Statement on Thematic Review with focus on “the Summit of the Future”, 2024

<sup>10</sup> WILPF, Written Input for Preparation of Zero Draft of the Pact

<sup>11</sup> World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report*, 2023

<sup>12</sup> UN Women, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot*, 2023

<sup>13</sup> *Global Gender Gap Report*, 2023

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According to the UN SDG Gender Snapshot Report 2023, we are looking at an alarming \$360 billion annual deficit in spending on gender-equality measures by 2030. By contrast, global military expenditure rose for the ninth consecutive year to an all-time high of \$2443 billion.<sup>14</sup> States' obsession with building weapon stockpiles and strengthening militaries inevitably means fewer resources are being allocated to sustainable development priorities, including gender equality and women's empowerment. Meanwhile, wars and armed conflicts cause further setbacks to sustainable development and human rights, impacting poverty, infrastructure, food security, water and sanitation, and the environment. It is also important to note that humanitarian aid and aid for the energy sector continue to have the lowest shares of aid with gender equality objectives, at 18% and 30% respectively.<sup>15</sup>

We reiterate the role of feminist and women's rights movements in all their diversity, who have been holding the agenda for equality and justice within communities and challenging systems of oppression on the ground. Their work, approach and strategies emphasize the importance of grassroots voices and efforts for sustainable development and impact. These movements are at the frontlines resisting violence, capitalistic greed, colonialism, and exploitation that undermine human rights and destroy our planet. Yet, they remain undervalued and inadequately resourced, with ODA to support women's rights organizations and movements, and government institutions at \$631 million on average per year in 2021-2022, down from \$891 million in 2019-2020, which is less than 1% of total ODA.<sup>16</sup>

Achieving the SDGs and true gender equality requires transforming the economic systems that exacerbate poverty and create barriers that disproportionately impact women and girls. We call on governments to build economies that are based on principles of care, and hold women and girls' voices, participation and human rights central to their success.

Governments must also enact laws and policies to end discrimination against women, girls and gender-diverse people in all spheres of life. Legal frameworks play a pivotal role in advancing gender equality by prohibiting discrimination, ensuring equal opportunities and protections. Without comprehensive legal protections and societal changes, progress towards gender equality will remain slow, leaving women, girls and gender-diverse people vulnerable to myriad forms of gendered violence, bearing a disproportionate part of unpaid care labor, and persistent underrepresentation in decision-making and leadership roles.

To date, people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions (SOGIE) are criminalized by law in 60 countries and *de facto* in two countries. Even in States where SOGIE

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<sup>14</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), *Global military spending surges amid war, rising tensions and insecurity*, 22 April 2024, <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2024/global-military-spending-surges-amid-war-rising-tensions-and-insecurity>

<sup>15</sup> DAC Network on Gender Equality, *Latest data on official development assistance (ODA) for gender equality and women's empowerment*, DCD/DAC/GEN(2024)1, 2024

<sup>16</sup> DCD/DAC/GEN(2024)1

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rights exist by law, social stigmatization and gendered violence remains alarmingly high.<sup>17</sup> The annual cost of gender-based violence (GBV) to the global economy is estimated at \$12 trillion and up to 3.7% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is more than double the education expenditures of most countries.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, only \$42 billion is needed to end GBV in 132 priority countries by 2030.<sup>19</sup> Sexual and reproductive ill-health accounts for one-third of the global burden of disease among women of reproductive age while according to the World Health Organization (WHO), 45% of all abortions are unsafe leading to 5-13% of maternal deaths.<sup>20</sup> The UN SDG Gender Snapshot report finds that 67 out of 120 countries and areas for which data exists lack laws that prohibit direct and indirect discrimination against women. In 53 countries, the law does not mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value.

Even where constitutional and/or legislative guarantees exist, implementation is insufficient. So we must start here and fund, facilitate and implement pluralistic and gender transformative and responsive laws and policies to move towards gender equality and a world where gender and sexuality based identities do not obstruct people's right to life, human rights, dignity and opportunities.

As WMG, we are also cognisant that we must 'break the statistical silence' as insufficient data is slowing and deterring progress on achieving the SDGs, making it not only difficult to track progress accurately but to also create targeted policy and interventions and address the root causes of gender inequality in diverse settings. In 2024, countries still lack 44% of the data required to track progress against SDG 5, especially on target 5.4.<sup>21</sup> We demand more investments in strengthening a pluralistic data ecosystem, which collects, systematizes, analyzes and disseminates gender disaggregated data (quantitative and qualitative), with full respect to confidentiality and privacy.

Time is running out, and states and global institutions must reckon that investing in gender equality and women empowerment benefits us all, including our economies, our resources and our planet.

## Closing the gender gap: what needs to be done

1. States must **adopt and implement a comprehensive policy framework for universal healthcare and expand the definition of essential services to include all sexual and reproductive healthcare services**, including accessible gender affirming care.

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<sup>17</sup> ILGA World database, <https://database.ilga.org/en>

<sup>18</sup> World Bank, *Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response in World Bank Operations: Taking Stock After a Decade of Engagement (2012-2022)* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2023) . <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/39934> License: CC BY-NC 3.0 IGO."

<sup>19</sup> UNFPA, Chapter 5: Cost of Ending Gender-Based Violence, 2020, [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Costing\\_of\\_Transformative\\_Results\\_Chapter\\_5\\_-\\_Cost\\_of\\_Ending\\_Gender-Based\\_Violence.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Costing_of_Transformative_Results_Chapter_5_-_Cost_of_Ending_Gender-Based_Violence.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> World Economic Forum, *Access to Healthcare*, 2022, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/05/access-to-healthcare-prioritize-woman-and-girls/>

<sup>21</sup> UN Women, *The Gender Snapshot*, 2023

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2. Ensure **healthcare services are inclusive, adolescent- and youth-friendly, age responsive, disability-friendly and gender-responsive**. Adequately **resource service providers** to meet the needs of women, girls, gender-diverse persons and people with disabilities, and include mental health services.
3. States must urgently repeal **unconstitutional and discriminatory laws and policies in line with international laws and treaties to guarantee human rights and gender equality**. This includes affirming the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) persons and **sexual and reproductive rights**. Recognize the right to safe abortion as a universal human right, remove barriers to access to high-quality, stigma-free, inclusive contraception and safe abortion services, and right to a safe and full sexual life as well as the right to make free, informed, voluntary, and responsible decisions about sexuality through the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).
4. **Develop and implement comprehensive policies to address all forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)**, including harmful and customary practices such as child, early, and forced marriage; forced pregnancy; female genital mutilation and cutting; honor killing; forced surgeries on intersex persons; conversion therapy; forced sterilizations imposed on persons with disabilities and those with diverse gender and sexual orientations; sexual violence in conflict; and intimate partner violence, including but not limited to marital rape.
5. **Invest in policy and infrastructure to support and provide redress and trauma-informed, survivor-centered services to survivors of multiple and intersecting forms of gender based violence (GBV)**, including technology facilitated GBV, and including in disaster, armed conflict, and humanitarian settings. **Ensure these services are considered essential**.
6. **Invest in cross-sectoral national care policies to recognize and value, redistribute and support the unpaid work of caring for each other and for the planet**, and thus transform to a caring society and economy at every level.<sup>22</sup>
7. **Protect and expand the space for feminist and social justice movements** in all their diversities to participate, organize and mobilize to demand and create change. **Invest in feminist and community knowledge and solutions and adequately resource feminist, women- and youth-led organizations and movements**, and historically marginalized groups through multi-year, flexible, core support.
8. **End punitive legislation, repressive and ad-hoc policies and practices targeting Indigenous, environmental, women human rights and LGBTI defenders, migrants, activists, journalists, peacebuilders, and trade unionists**. Address impunity for forced disappearances, arbitrary arrest and detention, killings, threats, harassment, intimidation,

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<sup>22</sup> Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Buenos Aires Commitment*, 2022, <https://conferenciamujer.cepal.org/15/en/documents/buenos-aires-commitment>

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and violence against human rights defenders, and create a secure and enabling environment through a robust national legal framework grounded in international law.

9. **Promote the leadership, and meaningful and inclusive participation of women and young people in all their diversity, in all decision-making processes, including planning,** policy and program creation, implementation, and evaluation. Establish and sustain institutionalized spaces within local, national, regional, and global policy arenas in which feminist and social justice movements can equally and effectively engage.
10. **Adequately resource and facilitate technology transfer, and provide training to enhance data and statistical systems,** with a focus on strengthening national statistics offices. Prioritize investment in the collection, analysis, and utilization of disaggregated data, including individual-level data on multidimensional poverty and inequality,
  - a. **Ensure disaggregation** by income, gender, age, race, marital status, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location, and other relevant characteristics. This comprehensive data is essential for understanding the interconnectedness of the SDGs through an intersectional lens;
  - b. **Recognize the intrinsic value of qualitative data** alongside quantitative data and incorporate data generated by civil society organizations, local communities, and Indigenous Peoples into decision-making processes.
11. **Address systemic and structural barriers to sustainable development especially faced by marginalized women and girls; consider a sustainable development framework** that utilizes an intersectionality approach, centers on and respects human rights, well-being, and right to development.
12. **Strengthen multilateral spaces and protect meaningful and inclusive civil society engagement and participation through** advancing civil society access, leadership, and decision-making within UN spaces, including providing financial support in the form of travel grants and paid internships, as well as facilitating providing ECOSOC consultative status to non-governmental organisations, and protect human rights defenders from reprisals and all forms of violence and targeted attacks.
13. **Address and prevent the corporate capture of the UN** and other multilateral forums. This includes negotiating and adopting a legally binding instrument on business and human rights to hold corporations accountable for their actions.
14. **Foster digital cooperation and improve governance of emerging technologies,** including artificial intelligence (AI) and other standard-setting initiatives from a gender transformative perspective. **Engage and enable participation of all communities, particularly from developing countries.** AI governance must reflect a true multistakeholder model with meaningful participation and inclusion of civil society, marginalized groups, and local and Indigenous communities based on institutionalized processes (such as the Major

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Groups and other Stakeholders mechanism) that are respected by UN member-states and all stakeholders.<sup>23</sup>

15. **Refrain from or cease the use of AI systems that are impossible to operate in compliance with international human rights law** or that pose undue risks to the enjoyment of human rights, especially of those who are in vulnerable situations,
  - a. **Include bans on certain technologies**, including so-called emotion recognition and gender detection technologies, which fail to respect human dignity and instead infringe on human rights by design and application;
  - b. **Language surrounding safe, trustworthy, secure AI should apply to military applications as much if not more than civilian uses.** Blanket national security/military exemptions are not consistent with international law and create dangerous loopholes for the use of AI by law enforcement, migration control and national security authorities. The UN must set higher standards, and States must pass a new legally binding international treaty to ban and regulate lethal autonomous weapons systems, also known as "killer robots."<sup>24</sup>
  
16. **Urgently respond to challenges posed by digitalization, including AI/Machine Learning and disinformation and misinformation. Digital platforms and businesses pose serious threats of authoritarianism, anti-rights and anti-gender actors and democracy as a whole,**
  - a. **Create stringent regulations and mechanisms to protect human rights against the impact of some AI technologies** for socio-economic-environmental progress towards meeting the SDGs;
  - b. **Repeal regulations that restrict women and girls in all their diversities to digitally access information** on their SRH and limit their expressions and identities;
  - c. **Move beyond non-binding AI ethics to a rule-of-law-based AI paradigm** committed to eliminating socio-cultural bias in AI systems, promoting the creation of public value and ushering in redistributive justice and gender equality in the AI economy.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Delivered Statement on behalf of the Women's Major Group, Global Digital Compact Consultations, 15 February 2024

<sup>24</sup> Access Now, *Joint statement: Finding the good in the first UN General Assembly resolution on artificial intelligence*, 2024, <https://www.accessnow.org/press-release/un-resolution-on-artificial-intelligence/>

<sup>25</sup> Feminist Digital Justice, *The Declaration Of Feminist Digital Justice*, <https://feministdigitaljustice.net/>

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Economic Pillar: Goals 2, 3, 8, 10 and 12

The realization of human rights is often affected by resource scarcity; hence, economic reform policies that affect availability of resources can negatively and deeply affect all human rights. As human rights are indivisible and interdependent, international human rights law needs to provide a consistent and comprehensive response to those economic reform policies.

[A/HRC/40/57 Paragraph 5](#)

The General Assembly, guided by the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, Reiterat[ed] the timeliness and importance of strengthening international tax cooperation to make it fully inclusive and more effective, both in procedural and substantive terms, so that Governments may better cooperate in generating financing for development, including through combating illicit financial flows, recovering and returning stolen assets, promoting financial integrity for sustainable development and improving public institutions, [and] note-[d] the corrosive effect that aggressive tax avoidance and tax evasion have on trust, the social compact, financial integrity, the rule of law and sustainable development, affecting the poorest and most vulnerable, [and] acknowledg[ed] that increasing the legitimacy, stability, resilience and fairness of international tax rules is in the common interest of all relevant stakeholders in tax systems and requires scaling up international tax cooperation by establishing the legal basis for fully inclusive and more effective international tax cooperation in terms of substance and process, giving due consideration to the value of coherent and consistent international tax rules while also respecting the tax sovereignty of each Member State.

[UNGA 78th Session Agenda 16 \(h\) Promotion of inclusive and effective international tax cooperation at the United Nations, A/RES/78/230](#)

Women make up 43% of the agricultural labor force and are responsible for half of the world's food production, but face discrimination when it comes to land and livestock ownership, equal access to credit, and much more. Women are food security multipliers, with a UN Special Rapporteur report finding that improving education for women is the single most important determinant of food security.

**Gertrude Kenyangi, Support for Women in Agriculture and Environment (SWAGEN)**

## The state of global wealth and inequality

“We can't forge forward if we do not look backward. If we don't understand where we are coming from, what led to the current... economic system, and the way that it is. Colonialism has simply mutated into neoliberalism, and therefore dismantling neoliberalism is our

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journey to reclaiming what is ours." *Mandanda Jessica, A Pan-African Feminist Primer on Wealth Taxes*

If we have learnt anything from the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing climate emergencies, it is that we must abandon our current models of consumption, power and unequal distribution of money. We must start building economies based on care that center equality and sustainability for all human beings and the Planet. Across the world, at the macro and micro levels, this asymmetrical distribution of wealth, power and resources is exacerbating inequalities, especially for women, girls, gender-diverse people, people living with disabilities, Indigenous communities and other marginalized groups.

WMG calls on governments to tackle these systemic and structural issues at their root. This requires policies that dismantle discriminatory laws and practices rooted in colonialism and patriarchy, and decisive action to address inequalities of outcomes and opportunities caused by income disparity and barriers to access to good health, education and skills. These are critical areas of social development and justice that require funding and policy facilitation. Governments must ensure that mechanisms are in place to support meaningful public participation and contributions from women and gender-diverse people, Indigenous People, and all marginalized groups, in the creation and implementation of any such policies and programmes.

Realizing this change requires a major paradigm shift in our economic models. There is a growing recognition of the alarming concentration of wealth and power among a select few while millions across the globe continue to remain in poverty without access to essential social and healthcare services. In 2021 alone, there were 2,660 billionaires with a total combined wealth of \$13.76 trillion and approximately 56 million millionaires<sup>26</sup>, representing only 1.1% of the world's adult population, yet owning around 46% of the global wealth.<sup>27</sup> The wealth of billionaires rises by \$2.7 billion daily and corporations in the US continue to make record profits due to enormous tax cuts, widespread tax avoidance schemes, and business-friendly trade and investment policies. This is in stark contrast to rising global inflation that continues to surpass the wages earned by a minimum of 1.7 billion workers.<sup>28</sup> We, therefore, call on governments and global financial institutions to address this wealth inequality from a structural standpoint and to tax corporations and rich individuals. Wealth taxes along with measures to curb tax avoidance and illicit financial flows are essential steps towards redistribution of resources, transforming current global power imbalances and thereby creating a more just and equitable economic system.

In addition to redistributive policies, there is also a pressing need to reevaluate the current global financial architecture and to reform financial institutions and their policy frameworks. "The current international financial architecture is a market-based profit making capitalist and extractive system, it's not based on human rights, it's not based on sustainable development, it's not based

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<sup>26</sup> Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMWA), *A Pan-African Feminist Primer on Wealth Taxes*, 2023, <https://www.akinamamawaafrika.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/AKINA-A-Pan-African-Feminist-Primer-on-Wealth-Taxes-3.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

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on honoring the planet”.<sup>29</sup> A vast majority of countries in the Global South, especially in Africa, are in a cycle of debt distress due to continued borrowing. We have statistical evidence indicating that debt servicing is creating a cycle of economic insufficiency and draining resources away from social service sectors such as healthcare, education, and social welfare.

“The malady of debt is a clear challenge to fiscal legitimacy, particularly for the global South, which the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance indicated in its recent report is extremely burdensome. In that report, the Group explains that the global South pays more for its debt than the global North. For instance, German and American bonds have average yields of 1.5 per cent and 3.1 per cent respectively, while bonds from Asia and Oceania, Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa have average yields of 6.5 per cent, 7.7 per cent and 11.6 per cent, respectively. That forces countries to prioritize debt repayment over servicing the well-being of their people. The report further states that 3.3 billion people live in countries where debt interest payments exceed their countries’ spending on education and health.”<sup>30</sup>

Most of this debt is illegal and colonial. “The system in place is one that was negotiated and developed over the centuries and was often based on terms and rules to which over 60 per cent of the global population was not privy, nor did they understand its logic. It was, however, developed with the consensus of the independent States of the time, but ignored not only colonized States but also women.”<sup>31</sup> IFIs must transform their approach to debt relief and prioritize investments in the care economy, guided by principles of human rights and sustainable development and particularly focusing on supporting the feminist and women’s rights movements and organizations as they are the ones who hold the care economy.<sup>32</sup> IFIs should look at broadening partnerships with women’s rights movements and recognise that care is a public good.

In addition, we demand that national governments must do more towards economic sustainability and promote responsible consumption and production patterns in order to fix the balance of resource scarcity. States must undertake national policy reform and incentivise people and corporations to adopt sustainable practices and discourage exploitative and wasteful consumption through regulations and fines. Governments must collaborate and consult with civil society, including women’s rights movements, to co-create and co-design transformative policies that prioritize the wellbeing of people and the Planet, as well as ensure their robust and sustained role in implementation and monitoring of such policies.

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<sup>29</sup> Women’s Major Group, *CSW68 Side Event: Feminist Perspectives towards a Care Economy and the role of the IFA reform*, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XMgXxRf8Do&t=186s>

<sup>30</sup> Human Rights Council, UNGA 55th Session, 2024, [A/HRC/55/54 Paragraph 13\(a\)](#)

<sup>31</sup> [A/HRC/55/54 Paragraph 13\(c\)](#)

<sup>32</sup> WMG CSW68 Side event

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## Recommended actions towards building economies of care and justice

1. **Prioritize policies that respect, protect, and fulfill the human right to adequate, culturally accessible, and safe food and nutrition for all**, with a focus on addressing the specific needs of women, girls, gender-diverse people, youth, and children and ensuring that this right is upheld during war, conflict and occupation. This includes providing nutrition education at all levels throughout a person's life cycle and incorporating traditional and local knowledge and practices. Prioritizing equitable access to nutritious food and nutrition education can improve overall health outcomes and promote the well-being of all individuals, reduce maternal and neonatal mortality rates, and reduce stunting and malnutrition among adolescent girls and children, especially in low income countries and thereby reduce the burden on already scant social services.
2. **Transform food and agriculture systems towards food sovereignty, gender equality and environmental sustainability**,
  - a. **Repeal trade and investment agreements on agriculture and food systems that further diminish small farmers and fisherfolks' access, control and sovereignty over the production, consumption and distribution of food;**
  - b. **This involves moving political support, subsidies, and incentives away from industrial agriculture models and monoculture production**, which degrade the environment and exacerbate gender inequalities. Instead, **redirect support and scale up finance towards regenerative systems of local, traditional, and biodiverse production and consumption**, including empowering small-scale farmers and investing in gender-responsive policies;
  - c. **Promote urban agriculture initiatives led by women and young entrepreneurs to enhance local food production, contribute to food security, and create sustainable livelihoods** and establish food innovation hubs that bring together women and young researchers, entrepreneurs, and farmers to explore innovative solutions for sustainable agriculture and food security.<sup>33</sup>
3. **Uphold land rights and accountability to protect vulnerable communities, especially women, and promote social justice**. Ensure there is regulation, accountability, and justice in cases of violations of the right to land, particularly for women, Indigenous Peoples, persons living in coastal regions, mountainous areas, conflict-affected communities and other structurally marginalized populations. This includes addressing inheritance laws, infringements on indigenous sovereignty, and land grabbing by governments and corporations. Establish robust grievance mechanisms to provide redress for small-scale farmers, indigenous peoples and persons living in the coastal regions whose land rights have been violated, and provide access to affordable legal services and fair land

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<sup>33</sup> ARROW, Asia Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action, 2024  
[https://arrow.org.my/apfsdyouthforum/wp-content/uploads/APFSD-YCA\\_2024\\_FINAL-1.pdf](https://arrow.org.my/apfsdyouthforum/wp-content/uploads/APFSD-YCA_2024_FINAL-1.pdf)

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administration. Provide adequate funding support for legal land allocation processes (land titling) for rural women as a means to secure their land property rights.

4. **Confront exploitative and unsustainable production and consumption patterns by shifting towards degrowth<sup>34</sup> mindsets grounded in sustainable, equitable production and resource use.** For this, enact progressive taxes, fees, fines, penalties, incentives, tariffs, and other regulations to promote sustainable consumption and production and emissions reduction,
  - a. **Hold to account corporations with unsustainable consumption and production practices that violate human rights, and penalize polluters.** Ensure a human rights-based approach to sustainable consumption and production, paying particular attention to the human rights of women and girls in all their diversity, including conducting gender and human rights assessments of trade and investment agreements. Enforce measures at every stage of production, distribution, and consumption to eliminate exploitation of labor and forced labor. Promote binding treaties<sup>35</sup> to ensure corporate accountability and the right to a healthy workplace and environment free of hazardous chemicals and waste.
5. **Ratify ILO Conventions and implement targeted policies to foster a more inclusive and equitable labor market and ensure the wellbeing of all and equal access to opportunities and rights,**
  - a. **Formalize and embed legal and social protections into national economic models to safeguard the rights** of informal workers, factory workers, domestic workers, those in the unpaid and paid care economy, women and gender diverse people and people with disabilities, including policies to guarantee fair wages, safe working conditions, and access to social protections through social protection floors. Specific measures should be put in place to address the unique challenges faced by women in the workforce, including combating gender-based discrimination, harassment in the workplace and access to equal opportunities of work and wages.
6. **Introduce progressive digital policies with an emphasis on equity and gender equality.** Policies that address the digital divide and protect digital labor are needed. This could involve targeted initiatives to provide affordable or free internet access in underserved areas, supporting digital skills training to empower citizens economically, and enacting labor protections for the growing number of gig economy workers and sectors that will be

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<sup>34</sup> "Degrowth is an idea that critiques the global capitalist system which pursues growth at all costs, causing human exploitation and environmental destruction. The degrowth movement of activists and researchers advocates for societies that prioritize social and ecological well-being instead of corporate profits, over-production and excess consumption. This requires radical redistribution, reduction in the material size of the global economy, and a shift in common values towards care, solidarity and autonomy. Degrowth means transforming societies to ensure environmental justice and a good life for all within planetary boundaries." <https://degrowth.info/degrowth>

<sup>35</sup> For example, EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive which aims to ensure that businesses address adverse impacts of their actions, including in their value chains inside and outside Europe

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replaced or heavily impacted by the use of AI.<sup>36</sup> Authoritarian states cannot use digital policies as an excuse to shrink civic space and infringe on the right to freedom of expression and an independent media.

7. Recognise and address the continued legacy of colonialism and extraction on social and economic inequalities in the Global South. Former colonial and neocolonial powers must **provide holistic reparations and restitution towards visible and transformative restorative justice to empower native economies, rectify systemic injustices and intergenerational inequalities between and within countries, and to adapt to the loss and damage inflicted on local ecologies.**
8. **Reform the global financial architecture to overcome multidimensional inequalities, including reforming, democratizing and strengthening global economic governance. Halt and reverse the rising inequalities between and within countries by redistributing wealth and resources through a progressive and equitable global tax system, ending the sovereign debt crisis and promoting debt justice, democratizing the global economic and financial architecture, and restructuring the global trade system in favor of local and small producers,**
  - a. **Member States should redouble efforts to substantially reduce illicit financial flows by 2030, with a view to eventually eliminating them,** including by combating tax evasion and corruption through strengthened national regulation and increased international cooperation;<sup>37</sup>
  - b. **Recognize the important role of taxation to close the sustainable development financing gap,** which requires actions at all levels, international, regional and national, and on many fronts, including corporate tax, personal income tax, consumption taxes such as value-added taxes, strengthened and digitalized tax administrations and effective taxation of extractives;<sup>38</sup>
  - c. **Emphasize that international tax rules must respond to the needs, priorities and capacities of all countries and appropriately address the ways in which modern markets operate** and business is done, as part of a major overhaul of the international financial architecture;<sup>39</sup>
  - d. **Recognize that international tax cooperation procedures should take into account the different needs, priorities and capacities of all countries to ensure inclusiveness and effective participation** of all in norm setting processes, agenda-setting, debates and decision making, either directly or through country groupings, according to their preference. This also involves capacity-building and support to

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<sup>36</sup> ARROW, APPC Multi Stakeholder Dialogue 2023: Call to Action, <https://arrow.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Call-to-Action-Multi-stakeholder-Dialogue-ahead-of-the-Seventh-APPC.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> UN General Assembly, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 22 December 2023, A/RES/78/230

<sup>38</sup> A/RES/78/230

<sup>39</sup> A/RES/78/230

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developing countries to be able to effectively participate in the full range of international tax cooperation in an equitable manner.<sup>40</sup>

9. **Take active steps towards new economies grounded in care, justice, human rights, sustainability, and ecological health and prioritize social welfare over corporate interests** to ensure equitable access to essential services and support the well-being of all,
  - a. **Move beyond GDP** and repurpose our economic system to the sustainable and inclusive wellbeing of people and planet<sup>41</sup>;
  - b. **Enhance the representation of developing countries in decision-making processes**, and especially the voices of feminist and women's rights movements;
  - c. **Guarantee and allocate public financing and resources for social protection systems and public social infrastructure** aimed at eliminating inequalities of outcomes, such as through gender transformative and progressive budgets for gender equality, health, and education and training policies and programs;
  - d. **Regulate and/or reverse the privatization of public services and social protection systems** to guarantee they remain public and thereby affordable and accessible;
  - e. **Recognise, reduce and redistribute the gendered division of labor in unpaid work and gender gaps in time spent in unpaid work, reinforced women's roles in unpaid reproductive labor and care work by increasing national budget allocations for public services and bringing in equal pay policy, skills upgrading for women and opportunities for decent work.**<sup>42</sup>

## Social Pillar: Goals 1, 4, 11 and 16

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### Misplaced priorities, heightened social vulnerabilities

Around the world and especially in low income countries, extreme poverty persists, disproportionately affecting women, girls, gender diverse persons and people living with disabilities. Projections indicate that global poverty rates will regress to 2015 levels, essentially threatening to eradicate most if not all progress made in the years since we adopted the 2030 Agenda. An estimated 342.4 million women and girls are expected to be living on less than \$2.15 a day and an astounding 220.9 million of these will be in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>43</sup> Millions of girls are still deprived of the chance to enter classrooms and complete their education, hindered by poverty, conflict, and the pervasive threat of SGBV, compounded by entrenched gender roles within

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<sup>40</sup> A/RES/78/230

<sup>41</sup> Wellbeing Economy Alliance: [well.org](https://well.org)

<sup>42</sup> ARROW, CSW68 Oral Statement, <https://arrow.org.my/csw68-arrow-women-gender-equality/>

<sup>43</sup> *The Gender Snapshot*, 2023

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households. This deprivation not only stifles their potential but also undermines the well-being of entire communities and perpetuates gender inequalities.

These are not just statistics. **We need to act urgently, and governments and global institutions need to commit to reducing these inequalities and addressing their structural causes. We need ambitious investments and a complete overhaul of policy and governance structures towards inclusive, democratic and social welfare models to ensure that all structurally marginalized peoples are able to enjoy the fulfillment of their complete human rights. This includes freedom from violence, participation in policy and decision-making, comprehensive and universal healthcare including sexual and reproductive health services, access to education and skills training, access to land and economic opportunities.**

**We need urgent financial commitments, but we must also ensure that we leave no one behind and that entails greater and just resource allocation towards socially progressive, human rights-based, gender- and disability- responsive systems, policies and institutions, as well as intersectionality in our purpose and intent. This is the only way to address the intersecting forms of oppression and inequality faced by women, girls, and Indigenous communities and thereby reduce poverty and build sustainable and peaceful societies.**

We are already lagging far behind on our gender equality commitments, and with war and conflict simultaneously wreaking havoc in numerous regions across the world, our goals of sustainable development, justice and equity seems even further away. Historically and presently, the repercussions of warfare are manifold and catastrophic, devastating lives, displacing populations, and laying waste to critical infrastructure. Invariably, women and girls are bearing the brunt of these man-made catastrophes. Women and girls are often the first responders in crises and therefore also pivotal to the survival and resilience of communities. They provide essential humanitarian and peacebuilding support to communities and are at the forefront of preventing violence before it breaks out, mediating disputes, and providing support to impacted groups. And yet despite commitments from over 100 member states on women, peace and security, the proportion of women participating in peace processes nationally, regionally and globally as negotiators or delegates is declining.<sup>44</sup> Simultaneously, the number of peace agreements that address gender dimensions has stalled, between one fifth to one third each year.

As people, we must continue to protest armament and military warfare, and global institutions must play a vital role to hold governments accountable for this kind of destruction and violation of people's right to land and life. Without lasting peace, there can be no gender equality and therefore no sustainable development and justice.

**Spotlight: the impact of war on human rights, communities and the planet**

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<sup>44</sup> Women and peace and security: report of the Secretary-General, S/2023/725, 2023

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According to the annual report of the Secretary-General on WPS, **the number of women and girls living in conflict-affected countries reached 614 million in 2022, 50 per cent higher than the number in 2017.** During 2023, there were attacks on health centers in places including Haiti, Mali, Myanmar, Sudan, Ukraine, and Palestine, which limited access to life-saving health services including sexual and reproductive healthcare. 110 million people are displaced worldwide due to armed conflict, violence, and persecution.<sup>45</sup> Pre-existing gender inequalities and violations of women's human rights, as well as the pre-existing vulnerabilities such as the impacts of the climate crisis<sup>46</sup> are also worsened during armed conflict. Armed conflict disrupts access to food, water and sanitation, forcibly displaces communities, and impacts physical and mental health, all with gendered impacts.

**Sudan is among the largest internal displacement crises in the world.** 53 per cent of those internally displaced are women and girls, and there is a growing risk that the violence will soon create the world's largest hunger crisis. More than 7,000 new mothers could die in the coming months if their nutritional and health needs remain unmet. **More than 6.7 million people are at risk of gender-based violence, and reports of intimate partner violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, and trafficking in persons are widespread and increasing, with services and authorities rarely accessible.** The economic impact of conflict has further marginalized women, stripping them of livelihood opportunities and pushing many towards extreme measures and the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse as they seek to support their families. Sexual violence within and outside of armed conflict is being fueled by rising militarization and the proliferation of weapons<sup>47</sup>.

In Afghanistan, after decades of war, women, girls, and other marginalized groups, especially LGBTQI people and ethnic and religious minorities are living under oppressive Taliban rule. **The Taliban de-facto authorities have imposed over 50 edicts restricting fundamental rights to education, employment, movement, expression, and bodily autonomy, amounting to what many are terming "gender persecution" or "gender apartheid".**

**In Gaza, since October 7 2023, over 34000 Palestinians have been killed, including at least 14,500 children and at least 76,833 have been wounded. More than three quarters of the 2.2 million people living in Gaza are estimated to be internally displaced.**

In Rafah, around 1.4 million displaced people are sheltering in tents, including tens of thousands of vulnerable pregnant women, new mothers, and newborns have been forcibly displaced multiple times and have nowhere else to go. 75% of all homes, hospitals, health clinics, and schools in Gaza have been destroyed or damaged. According to WHO, only 12 hospitals out of 36 facilities in Gaza are even partially functional; those functioning are operating at five times

<sup>45</sup> WILPF Statement to UNSG., 68th Session of CSW, E/CN.6/2024/NGO/126, 2024

<sup>46</sup> UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/build-better-futures/climate-change-and-displacement>

<sup>47</sup> Report of the UN SG on conflict-related sexual violence, 2023, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/202404-UN-annual-report-CRSV-factsheet-covering-2023.pdf>

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their capacity. Only two fully functioning maternity hospitals remain in the whole of Gaza, as of writing of this paper. Healthcare facilities and workers have been under constant attack and are working under immense stress and hardship, without electricity and the most basic medical supplies, leading to the decimation of the entire healthcare system in Gaza.

**180 pregnant women give birth daily in Gaza and face immense challenges in accessing adequate medical care, leading to a surge in obstetric emergencies characterized by a significant increase in miscarriages and preterm births.**

**Over 690,000 menstruating women and girls in Gaza struggle to access menstrual hygiene products and have had to resort to using tent scraps; and lack of water, hygiene facilities, and privacy are heightening risks of infections.<sup>48</sup>**

**The blatant disregard of international law, including undermining the UN Charter and the complicity of some countries have caused “widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment”, which is a war crime under the Rome Statute, with 48% of Gaza’s tree cover and farmland destroyed, accumulation of 22.9 million tons of debris and hazardous material and 100k cubic meters of sewage spewing into the sea daily.<sup>49</sup>**

## Recommended actions towards sustainable social development and justice

1. **Develop and adequately finance comprehensive, gender-transformative and rights-based social protection systems** that are targeted to include coverage for services needed by women, girls, and gender-diverse people and people living with disability.
2. **End austerity measures, reverse the upward trend in military expenditure and curb military spending, and increase investments in economic recovery, public services, and social protection to safeguard public goods and fulfill human rights.** Eliminate discrimination against all structurally marginalized people in the design and accessibility of social protection programs.
3. **Implement universal and sustainable social protection systems** to prevent individuals from falling into poverty. This includes advocating for the establishment and enhancement of social protection floors to ensure income security for all, particularly for older persons and

<sup>48</sup> UN Women, Gender alert: The gendered impact of the crisis in Gaza, 2024, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/Gender%20Alert%20The%20Gendered%20Impact%20of%20the%20Crisis%20in%20Gaza.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> Slowfactory, <https://slowfactory.earth/center-for-collective-liberation>

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- children, and establishing inclusive policies and affirmative action measures to ensure equitable access to opportunities for historically marginalized and discriminated groups.<sup>50</sup>
4. **Target and sustain efforts to remove gender bias, stereotypes, and discrimination within education and training systems**, from teacher recruitment to curriculum development to ensure universal learning outcomes. Consistent values clarification for attitude transformation (VCAT) and sensitisation training must be carried out to reduce prejudice and discrimination among educators, staff, and professionals who organize activities in the field of youth and youth development.<sup>51</sup>
  5. **Prioritize the delivery of CSE both in and out of school settings** in an environment that is free of stigma, discrimination and coercion. Develop the capacity of teachers to deliver CSE in a life skills-based approach. Engage with out-of-school children and youth through outreach programmes. Expand digital learning opportunities for CSE targeting young people, including by sharing best practices among countries across the region.
  6. **Ensure school and all learning environments are safe and free from violence, address structural barriers to education and training, and promote equitable and universal access to technology and new learning methods.**
  7. **Encourage the use of innovation and technology in education and training.** Public internet facilities should be installed in communities to bridge the digital divide. However, when thinking about digital solutions and technologies we must also be cognizant of the gendered use of technology, threat to privacy and cyber security, and the risk of backlash and work towards bridging these gaps.<sup>52</sup>
  8. **Rethink and redevelop human settlements, including cities, from a feminist perspective.** All public spaces should be safe, inclusive and accessible. This involves shifting away from a productivist and mercantilist logic and prioritizing environments that center the well-being, needs and experiences of the people who use them, including women, girls, gender-diverse people and people with disabilities.
  9. **Invest in building transportation services and infrastructure that recognize different mobility needs and accommodate the needs of diverse groups**, including older women, women and girls with disabilities and gender-diverse people. By acknowledging the key role of safe, accessible, and affordable transportation in women's access to opportunities in education, economic development, and political participation, governments can promote gender equality and social inclusion.

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<sup>50</sup> ARROW, Asia Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action, 2024  
[https://arrow.org.my/apfsdyouthforum/wp-content/uploads/APFSD-YCA\\_2024\\_FINAL-1.pdf](https://arrow.org.my/apfsdyouthforum/wp-content/uploads/APFSD-YCA_2024_FINAL-1.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Asia Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action, 2024

<sup>52</sup> Asia Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action, 2024

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10. **Actively disarm, discontinue funding for militaries and weapons, and cease arms transfers. Invest in care services, infrastructure, and universal social protection** for crisis response to enable just, equitable, and nonviolent governance. Additionally, adopt expansive, feminist understandings of security that center on human security, bodily autonomy, and the fulfillment of human rights.
11. **End foreign occupation, and recognize and respect the right to self-determination and development. Invest in inclusive peace processes that address the root causes of conflict and violence, such as capitalism, militarization, occupation, and patriarchy.** These processes should involve the full, equal, effective, and meaningful participation of civil society, women, and young people in all their diversity without reprisals or intimidation, and should incorporate gender-transformative provisions.
12. **Uphold all people's right to migrate, not to migrate, and to return to their countries of origin and eradicate criminalisation of migration.** Support women, girls and older women who migrate to be able to rebuild their lives economically, socially, culturally and politically in their host countries.
13. **Reject forced migration and propose the creation of coordination, monitoring and responsive mechanisms considering migratory dynamics caused by political violence, organized crime, and the economic, social and climate crises.** The delegitimization of our democratic institutions, including the justice system, which criminalizes migrants, women, children, youth and workers, constitutes today one of the most dangerous problems for our coexistence and for the development model to which we aspire. Environmental degradation, extractivism, looting and displacement of populations due to the contingencies of climate change and corporate predation have not stopped, particularly affecting indigenous peoples, peasants and Afro-descendants.
14. **Uphold international law by strengthening norms and accountability mechanisms, and recognise ecocide<sup>53</sup> as an international crime to highlight the urgency of environmental protection in conflict zones.**
15. **Restore the UNSC's effectiveness and legitimacy by updating its composition and unfair decision-making rules to better reflect ongoing shifts in global power dynamics and emerging centers of moral clarity, with a clear political commitment made in the Pact.** For this, expand the Council's membership and reform the power of the veto, to create more equitable representation and prevent Permanent Five members from abusing their position, rather than contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security.
16. **UN member states and mandate holders must take urgent steps to counter anti-rights mobilization as a matter of priority through meaningful collaboration with feminist and**

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<sup>53</sup> *Ecocide* is the unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts, <https://www.stopecocide.earth/legal-definition>

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**social justice movements** to develop robust, comprehensive, and effective responses to the threats of fascisms and fundamentalisms. **Advocate for processes and procedures that enhance the accountability of human rights systems and take all possible measures to stop anti-rights actors' access to decision-making positions.**<sup>54</sup>

17. **Repeal repressive laws that target CSOs (such as "foreign agent laws"), activists, media and people's organizations** and invest in strengthening and expanding civil society participation in decision-making at all levels of policy making and governance to promote transparency, public accountability and inclusivity.
18. **Uphold rule of law and promote access to justice through equitable allocation of increased budgets** for independent judiciaries and legal aid services, implementation of robust anti-corruption frameworks, and reform of legal systems to ensure non-discrimination for the respect, protection and fulfillment of human rights.
19. **Implement open-government initiatives**, strengthening whistleblower protection mechanisms, and ensuring transparent, accurate, and timely public information access.

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<sup>54</sup> AWID, Rights at Risk: Time for Action: Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report 2021

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Environment Pillar: Goals 6, 7, 9, 13, 14 and 15

**Energy transition programs in some States have been linked or have contributed to serious human rights abuses, such as land grabs, forced displacements, child labour, modern slavery, discrimination, environmental pollution, and others. The energy transition cannot replicate or create new forms of human rights and environmental abuses, including poverty, corruption and conflict risks. The energy transition drive must be consistent with States' human rights obligations and commitments, including the realization of the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, SDG13 on climate change mitigation and adaptation, and with the Paris Agreement.**

[A/78/155](#)

**"While we recognize the decision on the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund, we should not leave here feeling that on Loss and Damage we have met our goal. We're hearing hundreds of millions pledged so far and not all of this is new and additional. The need is in the hundred of billions. We also hear the claim by developed countries that they have no responsibility to pay for Loss and Damage – this is a denial of climate justice, their climate debt and historical responsibility. Financing to address Loss and Damage must be included in the new finance goal next year, the new collective quantified goal (NCQG), as the third pillar of finance with funding additional to support for mitigation and adaptation."**

**Liane Schalatek, Associate Director, Heinrich Böll Foundation, COP28**

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## Indigenous Peoples are the best stewards of our environment

Just as there is no life without water, there is no life for millions of people in coastal and riparian communities without small-scale fishers and fish workers. The full enjoyment of human rights by small-scale fishers and fish workers is therefore a necessary precondition for the realization of the right to food by everyone... The pandemic, climate change, pollution and overfishing are brutally harming small-scale fishers, fish workers and their communities. **Nevertheless, small-scale fishers, fish workers and Indigenous Peoples remain stewards of the world's waters; they have demonstrated a capacity to adapt to climate change and play an important role in restoring, conserving, protecting and jointly managing local aquatic and coastal ecosystems... They are integral to most countries' recovery from the pandemic and food system transformation**, considering that small-scale fisheries employ more people than all other ocean economic sectors combined... small-scale fishers and fish workers are still often marginalized or ignored by governments, international organizations and businesses when environmental and commercial plans are devised and implemented. **Their human rights are often violated – whether through exploitation or dispossession from territorial waters** – as a result of industrial fishing fleets and large-scale aquaculture servicing global seafood buyers, the establishment of no-fishing reserves for conservation (“marine protected areas”), coastal development and industrialization of seascapes, the construction of dams, and offshore oil and gas operations. [A/HRC/55/49, Paragraphs 1, 7 & 8](#)

## The urgency of climate change

The climate crisis is not a distant threat; it is happening in the present and affecting us all, and its impact is not “borne equally or fairly, between rich and poor, women and men, and older and younger generations”.<sup>55</sup> Climate justice is therefore not just about ecological conservation but, at its core, it is an issue of justice, dignity and human rights. And it is disappointing to see that references to protect, respect and promote human rights remained largely missing from the COP28 global stocktake.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> UN, 2019

<sup>56</sup> Mwanahamisi Singano, Global Policy Lead, WEDO, COP28

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The carbon footprint of the Global North is “100 times greater than that of the world’s poor nations combined. In 2019, the top 10% of global emitters (771 million individuals) were responsible for about 48% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, while the bottom 50% (3.8 billion individuals) were responsible for only 12% of all emissions”.<sup>57</sup> Global South countries not only contribute significantly less to climate change and have had a less equal share in the direct benefits of fossil fuel use, including energy consumption, but are currently bearing the most significant and devastating impacts of climate change. The current state of affairs risks pushing up to 158.3 million more women and girls into poverty (16 million more than the total number of men and boys) and increasing food insecurity for as many as 236 million more women and girls, compared to 131 million more men and boys.<sup>58</sup> Already, we are seeing that climate change is making meteorological hazards more frequent, severe and, ultimately, more destructive. Between 2000 and 2019, flooding events globally affected 1.7 billion people and resulted in over 100,000 deaths, as well as causing \$650 billion in economic losses. Temperatures are at an all-time high; July 2023 was an estimated 1.5°C warmer than the average for 1850 to 1900.<sup>59</sup>

It is time to adequately and justly address the climate crisis and the violation of the human rights of people in the Global South as a direct result of hundreds of years of colonial exploitation and plunder, and the Global North’s neoliberal trade and economic activities that remain rooted in extractive practices of unsustainable consumption and greed. Developed countries must promise new and ambitious financial commitments to developing countries and fulfill past commitments of the \$100 billion goal. The historical role and responsibility of developed countries cannot be denied or downplayed, and as we witnessed during COP28, current “outcomes reaffirm a process that does not serve communities around the world... While critical, this outcome, full of false solutions and dangerous distractions, threatens any hope of keeping 1.5 alive and undermines the very survival of people on this planet. An outcome that does not clearly state an end to the extractive system that has been harming, murdering, and destroying lands and bodies across the majority of the world cannot be applauded as delivering gender justice. An outcome that fails to center ambition in implementation and rebuild the essential trust and global solidarity needed for real climate action—with a clear commitment to new and additional grant-based public finance—is an outcome with no equity, no gender equality and no climate justice.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Global North and Global South: How Climate Change Uncovers Global Inequalities, 2022, <https://gceurope.org/global-north-and-global-south-how-climate-change-uncovers-global-inequalities/>

<sup>58</sup> The Gender Snapshot, 2023

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> WGC, COP28 Press Release, 2023

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Gender equity must be central to climate justice efforts. We call on Global North governments and global institutions to recognise and center the voices from the countries and communities most affected by climate change, including and especially women and girls, persons living with disability and Indigenous People whose “connection with seas and rivers reflects the deep intertwining of their livelihoods, food security and culture<sup>61</sup>”. Data shows that women are not participating equally in climate change negotiations, Indigenous people are not consulted regarding land use and decision-making, environmental degradation, or are provided limited information on the governance of natural resources.<sup>62</sup> “In 2008, women accounted for only 31% of Party delegates (with only 15% Heads of Delegations) rising to just 35% in 2022 at COP27 and 34% at COP28, despite evidence that climate change exacerbates existing gender discriminations.”<sup>63</sup> Climate solutions must be led by local communities and rooted in indigenous knowledge and practices. Considerations towards gender equality in climate decision-making and inclusion of Indigenous Peoples as rights holders, remains an afterthought and undermines the effectiveness of climate change policymaking and risks human rights violations.

We need immediate action and investments to develop and implement adaptation and loss and damage strategies tailored to the specific contexts of diverse peoples and regions. This includes increasing investments in disaster risk reduction and prevention measures, as well as resilience-building initiatives to mitigate the devastating impact of climate events on communities and groups made vulnerable by different intersecting forms of discrimination and injustice, including an urgent need to ramp up investments in rural development, social protection, health services, and education to build community resilience. Financial support must be significantly increased for the most vulnerable people and regions, prioritizing both climate adaptation and mitigation efforts alongside ODA.

In times of disaster, rapidly-dispersible and flexible funding must be made available to affected communities, including access to new research, new technologies, and agricultural and meteorological data. Additionally, securing the land and water rights of Indigenous Peoples and rural communities is essential for sustainable adaptation efforts.

On a global scale, efforts to reduce poverty and inequalities are paramount for building resilience to climate change impacts among the most vulnerable populations. Ambitious measures must be implemented to meet the commitments outlined in Agenda 2030 and the Paris Climate Agreement. Only through concerted action at all levels, from local communities to international cooperation, can we effectively address the urgent challenges posed by the climate crisis and safeguard the future of our Planet and its inhabitants.

## **Actions to address the roots of the climate crisis and uphold climate justice**

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<sup>61</sup> [A/HRC/55/49](#), Paragraph 12

<sup>62</sup> Women Gender Constituency, Letter to COP29 Presidency, 2024

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

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1. **Recognize access to water and sanitation as human rights and strengthen policy and infrastructure for the provision of safe drinking water and accessible sanitation facilities for all**, with a focus on women, girls, gender-diverse persons, and persons with disabilities and for those in vulnerable situations, including those living in urban peripheries, Indigenous and traditional communities, and conflict- or climate-related disasters.
2. **Increase public investments across the water sector, diversify solutions, mobilize local expertise to advance climate outcomes.** For this,
  - a. **Fund innovation and technology** while empowering communities to shift to biodegradable materials;
  - b. **Decentralize water use regulation and promote women's participation in water-related resource management**;
  - c. **Create mechanisms to monitor and penalize dumping of hazardous materials** into natural water resources to preserve ecosystems;
  - d. **Adequately resource training and gender mainstreaming** in community-owned water services.
3. **Continue and expand efforts to integrate climate change education, awareness and sensitisation into formal and informal school curricula at all levels.** Develop climate change awareness and educational materials in accessible and inclusive formats. Ensure that everyone is aware and can take proactive initiatives to address the impact of climate change. Organize public awareness campaigns and provide training for local authorities and communities on disaster preparedness.<sup>64</sup>
4. **Ensure the access, availability, affordability, adaptability and quality of SRHR services that address the impacts of climate change** and that the design, development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all climate-related SRHR policies and services address the multiple barriers faced by Indigenous Peoples, marginalized individuals living in poverty, underrepresented groups and underrepresented groups of people with disabilities, such as persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, and deaf and/or blind persons.<sup>65</sup>
5. **Scale up finance to increase access to affordable, reliable, safe, and modern energy sources.** Provide financial, political, and legal support to women and community-owned energy enterprises and foster their participation in decision-making and governance across the energy sector.
6. **Develop capacity-building programmes tailored to women and young people's involvement in climate adaptation.** Inspire and equip women and young people with practical lifelong education, knowledge and tools for implementing sustainable development models in ongoing programmes and plans.<sup>66</sup>
7. **Eliminate subsidies for the fossil fuel industry and biomass energy and prioritize**

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<sup>64</sup> Asia Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action, 2024

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**investments in a just transition towards low-carbon, renewable energy infrastructure and technology that is community-owned and democratically governed.** Additionally, redirect funds to essential public services and social protection programs, promote sustainable practices and create robust mechanisms to ensure accountability of actors at all levels through the development and implementation of national energy and climate action plans.

8. **Enhance international cooperation and technology transfer to facilitate access to clean energy and modern energy solutions globally.** In addition, finance, facilitate and support capacity building for low income countries to create and implement policies that promote sustainable industrialization and technological innovation by fostering inclusive and sustainable industrial growth and in turn help generate training, employment and income and improve quality of life for all human beings and the Planet.
9. **Create mechanisms and ensure the accountability of Global North countries and corporations to lead deep, rapid, and sustained greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions, without resorting to offsets or false solutions.** This includes a moratorium on new oil and gas projects and phasing out subsidies for the fossil fuel industry.
10. **Provide debt-free climate finance, means of implementation, and international support mechanisms to emerging economies** to meet their fair share of emissions reductions, ensuring access to renewable energy technologies.
11. **Scale-up adaptation finance in line with developed countries' commitment to at least double the provision of adaptation finance by 2025.** Ensure this funding is easy-to-access, long-term, and trackable to allow the most vulnerable to build their adaptive capacity and enhance their resilience.
12. **Ensure that pledges to the Loss and Damage Fund respond to the urgency and intensity of climate impacts, with climate finance as new and additional to ODA.** IFI entry to climate finance, through conditionalities imposed would result in extra fiscal burdens to 'debt distressed' countries.<sup>65</sup>
13. **Provide grant-based public finance to all developing countries and communities for climate-related losses and damages,** with transparent mechanisms for assessment, relief, and compensation during disasters. Recognise and compensate for the loss of marine biodiversity, acknowledging the impact on associated coastal communities and foregone goods and services.
14. **Ensure the sustainable management of forests and the protection, restoration,**

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<sup>65</sup> ARROW, APPC Multistakeholder dialogue, 2023

<sup>66</sup> Asia Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action, 2024

<sup>67</sup> WMG Written Inputs to Zero Draft of SOTF, 2024

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conservation and sustainable use of important landscapes by recognising the vital role of Indigenous Peoples as stewards of the forests and biodiversity; and commit to protecting and implementing the rights of Indigenous Peoples under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and international human rights laws.

15. **Utilize all available means to assist fragile marine systems and vulnerable coastal communities in adapting to irreversible climate change**, acknowledging the urgent need for action.
16. **Eliminate perverse incentives for unsustainable agriculture, livestock production, and monoculture tree plantations**, redirecting financial policies and incentives to support community-based approaches to organic farming and science education, forest conservation and women's small-scale farming practices.
17. **Implement existing international environmental agreements and ensure policy coherence** between conventions combating desertification, biodiversity, and climate change.
18. **Reject securitized or militarized responses to the climate crisis and adopt responses that center human rights**, especially of those most affected.
19. **Amend existing provisions under the Paris Agreement to demand accountability and transparency of military and conflict emissions contributions, demand reductions and reallocation of military spending to mitigation, adaptation, and the loss and damage fund.** Current provisions give global fossil-fuel powered military activity a de facto free ride leading to 5.5% of total global emissions contribution without consequence or requirement to report such emissions.<sup>68</sup>

## Conclusion

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WMG stands firm in demanding the full, transformative and unconditional implementation of the 2030 Agenda, without compromise to any individual, community or country's rights anywhere in the world. We acknowledge the multifaceted challenges posed by our current social and economic systems and call for sustainable development and justice everywhere.

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<sup>68</sup> Katrin Geyer, Environment Advisor, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), COP28, 2023

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We demand that governments and global institutions adequately address underlying structural and power imbalances so that low income countries are able to deliver on the promise of sustainable development, especially for women, girls, trans and non-binary persons, people living with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples. As feminists and human rights defenders, we reject neoliberal capitalism and demand immediate reform of the global financial architecture, equitable redistribution of resources and wealth, economic justice, and the elimination of systemic discrimination and marginalization, and breakdown of normative heteropatriarchal ideologies that informs and directs distribution of power and resources. We call on the people and governments in the Global South to demand accountability for historical injustices and the continued exploitation of both people and the Planet by rich corporations and neo-imperialist governments of the Global North.

We demand an immediate dismantling of these systems of oppression propped up on centuries of inequality, injustice and occupation. Governments in the Global North must make immediate and sustained reparations and contribute towards building policies and systems that allow restoration from those harms. We insist on immediate action to halt current unsustainable practices of consumption that are harming life on land and below sea.

We cannot afford to go back and we must do more to protect our gains for sustainable development and gender equality. For this, we must recognise that women, girls, people with diverse SOGIE, people living with disabilities and other marginalized groups are experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and harm in their lives that create inequalities of outcomes and opportunities. We must also recognise their role as agents of change. Multilateral institutions and governments must deliver on democratic governance, both at the global and at the national levels, by creating safe spaces for the meaningful participation of women, gender diverse people, youth, people with disabilities and indigenous communities across all decision-making and governance spaces.

And with this knowledge, we must mobilize more and bolder resources to start rebuilding our systems and societies with care and equality at the center. We must usher in an era of these new resources and systems to invest in key public services, systems, and climate action that women, girls and Indigenous Peoples in all their diversity have been subsidizing for far too long.

## **Drafted and Edited by**

Bushra Shehzad

## **With Input from Women's Major Group Members**

### **Contributors**

1. Amir Zad Gul, Rural Development Organization, Pakistan
2. Cielito Perez, Center for Women's Resources

# Women's Major Group

3. Donatus Lili, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd)
4. Dr Barbara Bedeschi-Lewando, Women Talking Politics Journal (New Zealand Political Studies Association)
5. Fatou Ndiaye, Women's Major Group member
6. Foteini Papagioti, ICRW
7. Genevieve Riccoboni, WILPF
8. Georgia Tumwesigye, Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) Uganda
9. Gertrude Kenyangi, SWAGEN Africa
10. Hanna Gunnarsson, WECF
11. Julie Kim
12. Katie Tobin, WEDO
13. Marcella Ballara
14. Olabukinola Williams, Akina Mama wa Afrika
15. Olga Djanaeva, Women's association Alga
16. Paul Godswill Chukwuemeka - Initiative For Gender Equality and Sexual Reproductive Health (IGE-SRH Nigeria)
17. Radha Paudel, Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation
18. Rahim Jami, Education Defenders Network - EDN
19. Riju Dhakal, ARROW
20. Rita Luthra
21. Rumbidzai Elizabeth Chidoori, Sonke Gender Justice
22. Sehnaz Kıymaz Bahçeci, Women's Major Group
23. Shamala Chandrasekaran, ARROW
24. Tanyaa Sharma, ARROW
25. Tetet Nera-Lauron, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung
26. The African Women's Network for Community management of Forests (REFACOF), Cameroon
27. Tinashe Mundawarara, Sonke Gender Justice
28. Uzodinma Adirieje, Afrihealth Optonet Association (AHOA)
29. Valerie Bichelmeier, Make Mothers Matter
30. Waheed anwar, Rural Development Organization, Pakistan
31. Zarin Hamid, WILPF

## **Endorsements**

### **Organizations**

1. Afrihealth Optonet Association (AHOA)
2. Akina Mama wa Afrika
3. Amis de l'Afrique Francophone- Bénin (AMAF-BENIN)
4. Asian- Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW)
5. Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)
6. Asociación ciudadana por los Derechos Humanos (ACDH), ARGENTINA

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7. Asociación Regional Mujeres Ingenieras , PERU
8. Association d'Aide à l'Education de l'Enfant Handicapé (AAEEH)
9. Association pour le Développement de l'Entomoforesterie et la Sauvegarde de l'Environnement (ADESE), MADAGASCAR
10. Awaz Centre for Development Services (AwazCDS-Pakistan)
11. Brazilian Campaign for the Right to Education (BCRE)
12. Cameroun Ecologie (Cam-Eco), Cameroun
13. Center for Women's Research ( CENWOR) , Sri Lanka
14. Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
15. Coodinadora de la Mujer - Bolivia
16. DISABILITY PEOPLES FORUM UGANDA(DPFU)
17. Dr Uzo Adirieje Foundation (DUZAFFOUND), Nigeria
18. Education Defenders Network - EDN
19. Equipop
20. Fundación para estudio e Investigación de la Mujer, (FEIM)
21. GenderCC, Network of organizations working for Climate Justice
22. Gender Centru - Moldova
23. Initiative For Gender Equality and Sexual Reproductive Health (IGE-SRH, Nigeria)
24. Instituto de Desenvolvimento e Direitos Humanos (Institute for Development and Human Rights - IDDH)
25. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
26. NGO CSW LAC (NGO Committee for CSW in Latin America and the Caribbean)
27. Paradigm for Social Justice and Development (PSD)
28. Participatory Development Action Program (PDAP), Bangladesh
29. Pathways For Women's Empowerment and Development (PaWED-IATC), Cameroon
30. Red de defensoras del ambiente y el Buen Vivir (RedDABV); ARGENTINA
31. Red Dot Foundation
32. Red Ecofeminista Latinoamericana y del Caribe
33. Réseau Femme et Développement au Nord Kivu (REFED/NK), RDCongo
34. SEDRA ( servicio extension desarrorrural y agricultura) Chile, grupo Tematico Migracion y Desplazadas Mecanismo Soc Civil CEPAL ( LAC)
35. Society for Conservation and Sustainability of Energy and Environment in Nigeria (SOCSEEN)
36. Sonke Gender Justice
37. Soroptimist International (SI)
38. Temple of Understanding (TOU)
39. The African Women's Network for Community management of Forests (REFACOF), Cameroon
40. Vecinas Feministas por la Justicia Sexual y Reproductiva de América Latina
41. WAVE: Women in Adult & Vocational Education, Inc.
42. WLIT Community Development Initiatives (WLIT)
43. Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF)
44. Women for a Change, Cameroon (Wfac)
45. Women from Indigenous Nationalities (WE WIN)

# Women's Major Group

46. Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN)
47. Women Working Group (WWG)
48. Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
49. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
50. Women's Support and Information Centre (WSIC), Estonia

## Individuals

1. Ana Helena Rodrigues, Brazil
2. Andressa Pellanda, Brazil
3. Ayo Ayoola-Amale, Ghana
4. Barrister Edward Lyonga Ewule, Cameroon
5. Bertha Garcia Cienfuegos, Perú
6. Beverly Bucur, USA
7. Caryn DASA, Cameroon
8. Christianah .Olanike Mic-Taiwo Nigeria
9. Daksha Vaja, Community Science Centre, Vadodara, Gujarat, India.
10. Dawn Nelson, USA
11. Dr. Ernestine NGO MELHA, France
12. Dr. Uzodinma Adirieje, Nigeria
13. Dr Barbara Bedeschi-Lewando, New Zealand
14. Echoes of Women in Africa Initiatives, Nigeria.
15. Elaine Butler, Australia
16. Fatou Ndiaye, Senegal
17. Fernanda Brandão Lapa, Brazil
18. Gabriele Koehler, Germany
19. Hanna Gunnarsson, Sweden
20. Kala Peiris , Center for Women's Research ( CENWOR ), Sri Lanka
21. Mabel Bianco, Argentina
22. Marcela Ballara , Chile
23. María José Lubertino Beltrán, Argentina
24. Michele Tan, Singapore
25. Olga Djanaeva, Women's Association Alga, Kyrgyzstan
26. Pamela Martín García, Argentina
27. Pam Rajput, India
28. Paul Godswill Chukwuem
29. Bette Levy, USA
30. Radha Paudel
31. Shaila Shahid, Bangladesh
32. Suiany Zimmermann Bail, Brazil
33. Terry Dale Ince, Trinidad & Tobago
34. Waheed anwar, Rural Development Organization, Pakistan
35. Wazeh Noline Nwenushi, Cameroon

# Women's Major Group