

# The GEF Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Actions

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*The key priorities and actions outlined in this document are based on extensive discussions within the GEF Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Actions Working Group of the B+25 Network. For the Beijing +25 review, there are six Action Coalitions centring on critical areas for women's rights and gender equality: Gender-Based Violence, Economic Justice and Rights, Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Feminist Action for Climate Justice, Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality, and Feminist Movements and Leadership, plus the GEF Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Actions.*

## Overview of the Issue in Canada

- Canadian feminists are leaders in domestic and international peace and security initiatives and global humanitarianism. Canadian women's groups are critical of the federal government's unwillingness to sign the Nuclear Ban Treaty and its continuation of arms exports to countries that violate human rights.<sup>1</sup>
- Canada's 2017 Feminist International Assistance Policy sets Canada apart as one of the few donor countries focusing its development and humanitarian funding on progressing women's rights, gender equality, empowerment of women and girls, and expanding integration of these efforts to all international assistance programs. This, despite the fact that only 1–2% of Canada's aid budget between 2012 and 2017 was directed to these outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

Canada appointed its first Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and acceded to the Arms Trade Treaty in 2019. Canada released its second National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security and the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Support Operations in 2017, which is comprised of an ambitious agenda to increase women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, address conflict-related sexual violence, protect women and girls' rights in conflict settings (including sexual and reproductive rights), and strengthen the capacity of peace operations.<sup>3</sup> Canadian women

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<sup>1</sup> Finn (2018), as cited in: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. (2019). *Unfinished Business: A Parallel Report on Canada's Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. <https://www.criaw-icref.ca/updates/unfinished-business/>

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Statistical Reports on International Assistance, as cited in *Unfinished Business* (2019)

<sup>3</sup> Global Affairs Canada (2017), as cited in *Unfinished Business* (2019)

are at the forefront of peacebuilding and humanitarian action. They are strong advocates for peace, nonviolence, disarmament, diplomacy, demilitarization and sustainable development. Their leadership for peace and human security must be recognized and included in decision-making processes at the local, national, regional and global levels. The Generation Equality Forum (GEF) Compact articulates an important, intersectional and intergenerational approach for dismantling discriminatory barriers to equal participation of women in these fora for peace and security. The GEF Compact calls for the promotion of women's human rights and the protection of women peacebuilders and human rights defenders.

Canada released a National Action Plan (CNAP) on WPS, a Feminist International Assistance Policy and the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations in 2017. This has been a necessary, ambitious agenda to increase women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, address conflict-related sexual violence, protect women and girls' rights in conflict settings (including sexual and reproductive rights), and strengthen the capacity of peace operations. The Feminist International Assistance Policy sets Canada apart as one of the few donor countries focusing its development and humanitarian funding on progressing women's rights, gender equality, empowerment of women and girls, and expanding integration of these efforts to all international assistance programs. This, despite the fact that only 1–2% of Canada's aid budget between 2012 and 2017 was directed to these outcomes.<sup>4</sup> As well, Canada's contribution to UN peace support operations remains very low despite the Elsie Initiative. Canada is ranked 69<sup>th</sup> in the world with only 62 soldiers (43 men and 19 women) deployed wearing blue helmets on UN peace operations.<sup>5</sup> In 2019, Canada acceded to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) that includes a provision about arms and gender-based violence and appointed the first Ambassador for WPS who has regularly engaged with women's organizations in Canada and around the world. Though Canada is a party to the ATT, arms exports to Ukraine, Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia and other countries continue.<sup>6</sup>

We believe that for Canada's international humanitarian actions to be considered effective they must consider the distinct needs, priorities and capacities of women, girls, men and boys of different ages and backgrounds. This also applies to Canada's implementation of the WPS agenda and Youth, Peace and Security resolution. Women must be allowed to participate fully and meaningfully in conflict prevention, resolution, and sustaining peace.

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<sup>4</sup> Canadian Statistical Reports on International Assistance, as cited in *Unfinished Business* (2019)

<sup>5</sup> UN Peacekeeping, Country contributions, ranking:

[https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/02\\_country\\_ranking\\_45\\_dec\\_2021.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/02_country_ranking_45_dec_2021.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> 2020 Report on Military Goods from Canada, Global Affairs Canada, <https://www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/controls-controles/reports-rapports/military-goods-2020-marchandises-militaries.aspx?lang=eng>

Human rights for environment defenders, and children involved in armed conflict must be defended. Humanitarian efforts must also support refugees, internally displaced women and girls, and survivors of human trafficking.

The foundation of the GEF Compact is the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and Declaration for Equality, Development and Peace. We are concerned that Canada has disregarded the Beijing Platform for Action's (BPfA) mandate that member states reduce military spending, advance peace and general and complete disarmament and promote education for a culture of peace. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)'s latest report on trends in military expenditures, Canada ranked 13<sup>th</sup> highest in the world for military spending at \$22.8 billion USD (\$30 billion CAD).<sup>7</sup> Canada also ranked 17<sup>th</sup> highest in the world for arms exports in 2020.<sup>8</sup> To fulfill its BPfA commitment and the WPS agenda, Canada must take action on disarmament and reduce arms exports. Canada should immediately sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.<sup>9</sup> Mediation and peaceful settlements of disputes are critical in preventing and countering violence, terrorism and extremism.

War and fossil fuel-powered weapons systems are exacerbating the climate emergency. In Canada, the military is the largest consumer of fossil fuel in the federal government, yet most of its emissions are excluded from the national reduction plan. Worse, the military has the biggest budget among all federal departments and agencies and its budget is increasing. We believe that demilitarization and disarmament are crucial for decarbonization. Military spending must be reduced and re-allocated to climate adaptation and mitigation. Women must also be involved in climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction to mitigate the climate crisis. We recognize that Black, Indigenous and other People of Colour (BIPOC) are often on the front lines of the climate crisis in Canada and other countries yet they are excluded or not treated equitably in decision-making and disaster responses. Canada must show greater support for climate financing and the transfer of environmental technologies to developing countries.

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/fs\\_2104\\_milex\\_0.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/fs_2104_milex_0.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/fs\\_2103\\_at\\_2020\\_v2.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/fs_2103_at_2020_v2.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Finn (2018), as cited in: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. (2019). *Unfinished Business: A Parallel Report on Canada's Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. <https://www.criaw-icref.ca/updates/unfinished-business/>

## Key Commitments per Thematic Areas

As part of the 25-year review process of the Beijing Platform for Action, UN Action Coalition leaders outlined the following thematic areas of focus:

**Thematic Area of Focus 1:** Help **narrow the gap between aspirations and concrete actions** on WPS and humanitarian action, while ensuring that existing global and regional processes are harnessed for **national and local engagement and action**.

**Thematic Area of Focus 2:** **Dismantle discriminatory barriers that prevent women's equal participation in government decision-making processes**, at the forefront of peace, security and humanitarian efforts, and to **promote and protect women's human rights** and the work of women peacebuilders and women human rights defenders, as well as **ensure women's leadership in all peace and humanitarian decision-making processes**.

**Thematic Area of Focus 3:** Strengthen the **inclusion of young women peacebuilders** and young women **affected by crisis** in peace, security and humanitarian processes and efforts, including in the context of the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda.

## Realizing Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Actions

### Key Priorities

#### Defunding the military/war:

- Create an agenda for disarmament and appoint an Ambassador for Disarmament to fulfill the 1995 BPfA, the UN Agenda for Disarmament and the UN Our Common Agenda
- End arms transfers to other countries, adhere to the Arms Trade Treaty and stop arms sales to Saudi Arabia and other countries that violate human rights
- Reduce military spending, and re-allocate support to urgent social and environmental programs
- Sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) to help rid the world of weapons of mass destruction
- Advocate for Canada's withdrawal from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a nuclear-armed military alliance

- Invest in and promote the inclusion of women in nonviolent peacebuilding, peacekeeping, peace support operations, and conflict mediation
- Abolish war as an instrument of foreign policy, and pursue feminist peace that is based in demilitarized security, nonviolence and justice
- Overcome pandemic impacts and avert catastrophic climate change by redirecting funding and applying a peace and security lens to the creation of a just, green and feminist recovery, and a universal care economy

### Strengthening women’s leadership, inclusion, and participation:

- Invest in creating safe spaces online for young women and gender diverse peacebuilders
- Provide federal funding to the peace organizations for Canadian women and youth; also meet Canada’s commitment to direct 25% of global humanitarian assistance to local and national organizations by funding women’s humanitarian organizations
- Review and reform restrictive immigration legislation impacting women and children seeking asylum in Canada

### Prioritizing people over war or profits:

- Promote democratic institutional building and conflict prevention programs,
- Increase dialogue with stakeholders to ensure protection of human rights and environmental defenders, as well as women and girl refugees. Environmental defenders should not be criminalized, nor should their activism be restricted using armed force
- Address gender-based violence and violence against Indigenous women, racialized groups, and those subject to human trafficking
- Refrain from violating international law and interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries that leads to their destabilization and refugee/migration crises

## Take Action

<b>Government Actions</b> <i>Holding the government to account</i>	<b>Grassroots Actions</b> <i>Feminist Work</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply and improve Gender-Based Analysis plus (GBA+) in federal budgeting and public funding decisions, and analysis of military spending</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand the review of Bill C-97 restricting access to asylum for women fleeing domestic violence</li> </ul>

impacts on women and girls, the environment, and climate

- Launch an updated National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security
  - Extend the appointment of Canada's Ambassador for WPS
  - Include and engage civil society groups to develop a national strategy for disarmament as required by the UN
  - Appoint an Ambassador for Disarmament
  - Sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
  - End arm sales to Saudi Arabia and other countries that violate human rights
  - Conduct national public education and consultation on military spending as suggested by the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs and the UN Agenda for Disarmament
  - Increase Canada's total spending on international assistance beyond the usual 0.28% of gross national income (GNI) to meet the agreed target of 0.7%
  - Increase spending on international assistance for peaceful democratic governance in conflict countries
  - Provide funding for women's peace research, capacity and engagement (similar to [IDEaS/MINDS](#))
- Organize and encourage more discussions on peace, disarmament, and human rights and their intersection with women's equality
  - Advocate for a Parliamentary study on military expenditure from a feminist foreign policy lens
  - Advocate for Parliament to conduct consultations and study disarmament and military expenditures
  - Advocate that the federal government release a feminist foreign policy
  - Demand that the Government of Canada reduce military spending and advance nuclear disarmament
  - Call for the withdrawal of Canada from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a nuclear-armed military alliance of 30 Western countries
  - Advocate for funding of peace research and engagement (similar to [IDEaS/MINDS](#))
  - Insist on a commission to investigate the Canadian military's involvement in the catastrophic failure of the US/NATO-led war and occupation of Afghanistan

## Acknowledgements

CRIAW-ICREF acknowledges its presence and work on the Indigenous Territories. We respectfully recognize the legacy of colonization upon Indigenous Peoples.

The key priorities and actions outlined in this document are based on extensive discussions within the GEF Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Actions Working Group of the B+25 Network. These discussions were held between March and October 2021 with the following feminist and women's organizations: Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (Tamara Lorincz), Global Women in STEM (Damineh Akhavan), and the Women, Peace and Security Network – Canada (Germaine Basita, Katrina Leclerc, Sunitha Bisan).

The findings were compiled and presented by Elizabeth Nguyen and Kenya Thompson.

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