

**Step it up G7:
An extraordinary time requires extraordinary solidarity**

Desperate times require bold and determined leadership. The COVID-19 virus represents a common challenge to the whole world and, like never before, reminds us of our interdependence.

We are experiencing an unprecedented health crisis that can now affect anyone and exposes the most vulnerable to additional risks. Because of deep-rooted gender inequality, girls and women worldwide will also experience the COVID-19 pandemic differently. We, members of the 2018 and 2019 G7 Gender Equality Advisory Councils, urgently call on G7 member states for joint emergency action to respond to the particular challenges facing women and to prevent the deterioration of gender equality and women's rights worldwide.

We call on all governments to take into account the gendered dimensions of this crisis. While men are so far slightly more affected, women make up seventy percent of healthcare and social service workers worldwide, putting them at the forefront of the crisis and at greater risk of exposure. They also hold the majority of low-paid and shut-down retail and service jobs, and are therefore even more economically vulnerable during - and after - this crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the imposed confinement measures have already resulted in a significant rise of domestic abuse, especially against women and children worldwide. Women's fundamental sexual and reproductive rights and services have been dramatically reduced. Progress in ensuring education for all girls has been set back. Women in conflict zones and living in camps for refugees and displaced people are facing the virus in the worst conditions. They need protection. All of us need more solidarity.

Firstly, the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council insists on the responsibility of G7 leaders to take special measures to support healthcare and social workers and to provide proper working conditions during the crisis, including all the necessary equipment and social housing near hospitals.

Secondly, it is urgent and vital to adopt special measures to protect those experiencing domestic violence. Governments should ensure efficient training of all first responders, create additional emergency shelter spaces, ensure immediate removal of abusers from homes and provide support for helplines.

Thirdly, governments should ensure that gender equality is front and centre of their education response. School closures will exacerbate existing gender inequalities, particularly for the poorest girls. Governments must keep all girls engaged in learning, factor in gender considerations when planning for school resumption and make good on aid commitments.

Fourthly, we demand that governments guarantee access to sexual and reproductive health services, including abortion, maternal health, and pre- and post-natal care. At this time of crisis, high unemployment and economic despair

for millions, we also call for free menstrual and modern contraception products for girls and women.

Fifth, government public service messaging is needed to encourage men to do fifty percent of care and housework traditionally carried out by women.

Finally, governments should also provide disaggregated gender data on the crisis to give healthcare professionals and policy makers the information needed to develop effective health and socio-economic responses.

As the crisis intensifies around the world, it is clear that if we truly want to save lives and deliver health, wellbeing, and dignity for all, girls and women must be front and center of, and included in the decision making of local, national and global emergency responses, in social and economic recovery efforts, and in how we strengthen our health systems post-pandemic – just as women are on the frontlines of the fight right now.

Without international coordination and solidarity, especially with the most vulnerable in our societies, this deadly pandemic will take a tremendous toll - not least in places where health systems are weak, unevenly distributed and where poverty paralyzes. This challenging moment is not only a call to protect people's lives and preserve their rights, it is also an opportunity to face our common failures, learn from them and build a better, more gender equal world that is healthier, more prosperous and more peaceful. This extraordinary time requires extraordinary humanistic leadership, free from xenophobia, sexism and economic mercantilism. It requires everybody's action – people of all genders, public and civil society sector. Our humanity must light up these darkest times.

Signed by the following members of the 2018 and 2019 G7 Gender Equality Advisory Councils:

- Alice P. Albright (CEO, The Global Partnership for Education)
- Lisa Azuelos (Filmmaker)
- Bochra Bel Haj Hmida (Lawyer, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2015)
- Emma Bonino (President, WE-Women Empower the World and European Council on Foreign Relations)
- Dillon Black (Anti-Violence Advocate, LGBTQ Advocate)
- Ouided Bouchamaoui (Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2015)
- Winnie Byanyima (Executive director of UNAIDS and former Executive Director of Oxfam International)
- Marie Cervetti (Une Femme et un toit)
- Professor Diane Elson (Economist and Gender and Development Social Scientist, University of Essex)
- Mercedes Erra (Founder and President of BETC)
- Caroline Fourest (Writer and Filmmaker)
- Rosemary Ganley (Journalist, Community Organizer)
- Leymah Gbowee (Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2011)
- Gargee Ghosh (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation)

- Brigitte Gresy (President of the Haut conseil à l'égalité France)
- Dayle Haddon (Founder of WomenOne)
- Yoko Hayashi (lawyer, current member and former Chair, UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women)
- Isabelle Hudon (Canadian Ambassador to France and Monaco)
- Muriel Ighmouracène (Writer)
- Katja Iversen (President/CEO of Women Deliver)
- Roberta Jamieson (President & CEO Indspire)
- Aranya Johar (poet and activist)
- Farrah Khan (Manager, Consent Comes First, Ryerson University)
- Michael Kaufman (author and activist)
- Aïssata Lam (President Youth Chamber of Commerce of Mauritania)
- Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka (Executive Director of UN Women)
- Virginie Morgon (CEO of Eurazeo)
- Vanessa Mounzar (Director for Gender, Women and Civil Society at the African Development Bank)
- Doctor Denis Mukwege (Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2018)
- Nadia Murad (Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2018)
- Irene Natividad (President, Global Summit of Women)
- Alexandra Palt (General Manager of L'Oreal Foundation)
- Natalia Ponce de León (activist)
- Inna Shevchenko (journalist and activist FEMEN)
- Kareen Rispal (Ambassador of France in Canada)
- Maya Roy (CEO of YWCA Canada)
- Grégoire Théry (Co-Founder of CAP International)
- Emma Watson (actor and activist)
- Isabell Welpé (University Professor and Chair for Strategy and Organization, Technical University of Munich)
- Malala Yousafzai (Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2014, activist for girls' education)