



Women's rights
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Op-Ed

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Women's rights: Emmanuel Macron's "great global cause" must become a reality at the G7

We are entering the final stretch before the G7 summit, which will open on 24 August in Biarritz. In September 2018, before the UN, the President of the French Republic Emmanuel Macron announced a 2019 G7 with a renewed format, focused on the Sahel region and on the fight against inequalities, and he called for women's rights to become a "great global cause". Only ten days away from the summit, what has been done so far is not enough. As the host of this G7, France not only needs to set an example on women's rights at national level, but it must also bring the other G7 leaders to collectively commit to achieve gender equality. It is time that the "feminist diplomacy" promoted by France proves itself, including within this G7.

Everywhere in the world, women and girls are standing up against gender-based discrimination and inequalities, from #MeToo to the defence of the right to abortion in Argentina and in the United States, from the fight against domestic violence in France to equal inheritance in Tunisia: it is time for governments to respond to these calls. The G7 countries cannot stand against History. The G7 countries have the means, through their foreign policy, through their official development assistance and through their domestic policies, to boost real change for gender equality. France has rightly placed these issues high on its G7 agenda and shows its ambition to bring forward a new feminist diplomacy, like Canada in 2018. Now France has to ensure that concrete political and financial commitments are taken by the G7 leaders.

The Women 7 (W7), which brings together around a hundred organisations and associations that are committed to gender equality all over the world, expects this G7 to tackle the root causes of inequalities and to adopt truly feminist and transformative policies. Yet, only ten days away from the summit, the expected commitments look more like soft adjustments, rather than signs of a truly feminist G7. The French Presidency made the choice to avoid the "sensitive" issues and by doing so dismissed some key ones that are central to fight gender inequalities, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, walking past issues that are crucial for women all over the world. And even if the announcements made at the ministerial meetings have referred to gender inequalities, marking a sign of progress, they have not been backed up by financial commitments which live up to expectations.

Civil society inclusion within the G7 process and at the Summit in Biarritz remains unsatisfactory. As of today, no feminist association will be sitting at the negotiation table with the G7 leaders. G7 countries, currently represented by six men and only one woman, will be taking decisions on issues such as women's economic empowerment, girls' education and health, without including the ones that are first affected.

Great challenges, either diplomatic, ecological or economic, cannot be tackled without women's and girls' empowerment, and without their effective participation to decision-making processes. It is necessary to go farther. Only a comprehensive feminist approach can effectively allow to fight against unequal gender power relations, for which the whole of society pays the price. The W7 publishes today, 23 August, an **Alternative Gender Declaration**, which offers a list of the minimum commitments and the respective criteria, which must be included in the final G7 gender declaration. There is still time for game-changing actions, if the right commitments are taken and if financial means are provided.



The first priority concerns governance. It is fundamental to effectively ensure women's and girls' participation, including feminist activists' participation, in the elaboration of public policies and in decision-making processes. Without taking into account feminist recommendations and analyses, domestic and foreign public policies will keep overlooking gender inequalities and will keep failing.

The second priority is financial. Current events in France are a reminder: the fight for gender equality, "great national cause", is still under-funded and feminist associations are too often left to themselves. It is essential to scale up public funding, with a significant increase of budgets for gender equality policies and for feminist associations, at national level as well as in foreign policies.

The W7 feminist associations count on G7 leaders to take strong measures and not to settle for weak so-called feminist policies, especially on the eve of a 2020 G7 under the United States' Presidency and a G20 led by Saudi Arabia. In Biarritz, we will keep count of the commitments taken for women's and girls' rights. We will count the concrete actions and especially, we count on making our voices heard.

By announcing his intention to "make women's rights a great global cause", Emmanuel Macron placed France as a leader on this issue and, therefore, has a historic responsibility: Biarritz must not be a new missed opportunity, but a moment of strong feminist mobilisation for the G7 countries.



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**Time passes by, inequalities remain.
Le temps passe, les inégalités persistent.**