

YOUNG FEMINIST EUROPE CONTRIBUTION TO THE CWS65 DRAFT AGREED CONCLUSIONS

“WOMEN’S FULL AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION AND DECISION -
MAKING IN PUBLIC LIFE, AS WELL AS THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE,
FOR ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF ALL
WOMEN AND GIRLS ”



As young intersectional feminists, we are committed to ensuring that gender equality and intersectional justice are achieved without leaving anyone behind. We believe that young feminists should be at the driving seat of this change. We seek to offer a truly feminist, transformative and intersectional vision that shapes multilateral, multi-stakeholder and multi-generational processes such as this one, and to contribute to the redistribution of power that is mindful of intersecting structures of discrimination and inequalities.

This requires that we not only push for the meaningful inclusion and participation of women, girls and gender non-conforming people in all their diversity in public life, but also seek to engage in transforming the core processes, norms and structures that impede and condition such involvement. For this, we must:

1. Ensure an intersectional approach

We want to draw attention on the following issues, and potentially consider adding language on them:

- As intersectional feminists, we incorporate an intersectional approach to our work. We acknowledge that no meaningful progress can be achieved without recognising women and girls as a heterogeneous group, subject to multiple systems of oppression and violence that intersect and reinforce each other. These forms of oppression are not isolated, and need to be addressed holistically as



structural issues, rather than as a matter of diversifying experiences.

- Intersectionality critically engages with multiple cross-cutting systems of domination (sexism, racism, classism, ableism, discrimination on sexual orientation, ageism and other markers of identity...), and it meaningfully works to rearticulate them.
- To do so, an intersectional approach must engage with the five main dimensions where discrimination, inequality, and oppression take place: individual, institutional and organisational, systemic and historic dimensions.
- Only like this it is possible to ensure a comprehensive and holistic intersectional approach to transforming oppressive power structures, addressing the root causes of gender inequality.

Language suggestions for the Zero Draft

- References to women should acknowledge intersectionality, and move beyond the gender binary, by ensuring reference to "*women, girls and gender non-conforming people in all their diversity*" throughout the document.
- Generally prefer the term "*gender-based violence*" to "*violence against women*" throughout the draft, as a more inclusive and nuanced term.
- Include actionable targets to hold processes accountable. Specifically, including the requirement of disaggregated data for all issues pertaining gender equality, so measures can be tracked accordingly to ensure they address intersecting structures of oppression.

2. Focus on transforming gendered power dynamics at all levels of our societies

We want to draw attention to the following issues, and potentially consider adding some language on them:

- Transformative feminist leadership is committed to addressing the root causes of inequalities and transforming them, attending to the different dimensions of change. Developing such forms of leadership is at the core of the GEF and the AC6, which focuses on Feminist



Leadership and Movement Building. Therefore, we demand that this transformative approach is put at the core of this process, and reflected in this document.

- Such transformative approaches should place women and girls' human rights at their core and avoid instrumentalizations of gender equality.
- By deploying the language of the '*public*' sphere, the draft reinforces the public/private divide, failing to recognise the continuum where unequal power dynamics are (re)created. We deplore the absence of attention paid to issues of SGBV and power dynamics beyond the public sphere.
- "Adding and stirring" more women into decision-making processes is not sufficient for truly transformative approaches. Thorough analysis of gendered power relations should be undertaken at all stages of policy design, implementation and evaluation to ensure that all policies actively contribute to deconstructing and transforming current gender hierarchies. Such mainstreaming is central to gender-transformative institutional reform. Furthermore, such power analysis should consider potential intersecting sources of oppression which may interact with existing gender structures.

Language suggestions for the Zero Draft

- Change the **title** "Strengthen *gender-responsive* institutional reforms" to "*gender transformative*", to ensure that there is a commitment to transforming structural issues, rather than just an acknowledgment of their gendered dimension.
- **Section 14:** add "Furthermore, women and girls' disproportionate poverty, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, violates a range of women and girls' human rights."
- **Para (q)** replace "*gender sensitive*" with "*gender transformative*"
- **Para (r)** add "to ensure the elaboration and implementation of comprehensive and intersectional gender power analysis processes at all levels and stages of policy and decision-making."
- **Para (bb):** add "*all forms of gender-based violence*" to the list of issues to address so as to facilitate women's participation in public life



3. Shift beyond youth participation towards transformative youth leadership

We want to draw attention on the following issues, and potentially consider adding language on them:

- Young women, girls and gender non-conforming people are almost absent from the draft conclusions. Yet they are a key driver and accelerator for the achievement of gender equality and intersectional justice globally. Youth make up more than half of the population and are mobilizing and leading some of the most pressing movements for equality, human rights and social justice. However, we are hardly present in the considerations of this draft.
- The only reference to young women, girls and gender non-conforming people is in regards to their “representation and participation in public life” (*para cc*). This language risks reducing their role to mere legitimating actors who are restricted to limited consultative or declarative roles. However, if we are truly committed to achieve gender equality, youth must be involved in decision-making through co-leadership and co-ownership of public spaces and processes. Only then can we move from diversifying to transforming structures, which is necessary for sustainable change.
- As mentioned, transformative feminist leadership is at the core of the GEF and the AC6, which focuses on Feminist Leadership and Movement Building. Therefore, we insist that this transformative approach, with a focus on the role of young women, girls and gender non-conforming people in all their diversity is put at the core of this process, and reflected in this document.

Language suggestions for the Zero Draft

- Shifting the language from descriptive youth representation and participation to co-leadership and substantive representation.
- **Para (cc)** replace “*representation and participation*” with “*leadership*”.
- **Paras (bb), (cc)** add “*removing structural and legal barriers*” to the measures to support women, girls and gender-non conforming people’s leadership in public life.
- **Paras (m), (u)** add “*youth activists*”.



4. Ensure that funding for young women, girls and gender non-conforming people, is not just channeled through youth serving, youth focused or youth centered organisations but to youth-led organisations.

- Globally, youth face high levels of economic precariousness and unemployment, and balance multiple responsibilities. This becomes even more evident with young women, and the burdens of unpaid care work that they are also responsible for. Many young people are involved in these processes with very limited or non financial or logistical support. This is also true for online spaces, where we tend to disregard the operative costs that young activists face (electricity, internet, computers/smartphones...). This perpetuates and furthers existing inequalities, particularly for activists in the Global South.
- Young women activists have very limited access to funding, and are still perceived as 'beneficiaries' of these processes rather than active agents. Therefore, we demand that young women are supported through core, flexible funding that recognises their contributions and responds to their self-defined needs.

Language suggestions for the Zero Draft

- **Para (x)** replace "women's organizations" with "women-led organizations"
- **Para (y)** add "including youth-led organizations".
- **Para (cc)** add "flexible funding for youth-led organizations" to the number of measures to support youth leadership in public life.

5. Shift from top-down approaches to co-creative, democratic and co-owned processes

- Capacity strengthening is key to enable a transformative approach to public engagement and gender equality, and should not be focused only on youth. The underlying belief that young people are the only group in need of training and building their capacities does



- not recognise the work, knowledge and skills that young people are already bringing, and it further perpetuates inequalities and stigma.
- Our vision to support youth public engagement and strengthening of their capacity goes beyond a top-down knowledge and skill transfer. Instead, it should involve all stakeholders and actors into a process of co-learning and co-creation, where youth are perceived as partners.

Language suggestions for the Zero Draft

- **Para (z)** replace “*capacity-building*” with “*capacity strengthening*” to ensure that the contributions of women, girls and gender non-conforming people are recognised.
- **Para (cc)** replace “*capacity developing*” with “*capacity strengthening*”.

6. Shift beyond “male allyship”: Ensure the genuine and transformative inclusion of people of all genders as integral to action for gender equality and women’s rights

- Section 15 adds the recognition of “the importance of the full engagement of men and boys as beneficiaries and agents of change, and as strategic partners and allies.” Simply adding the recognition of men and boys fails to encapsulate the importance and urgency of gender equality. Including all genders is integral to ensuring women’s rights are met and therefore the agreed conclusions should reflect this throughout.
- Including men and boys in actions to promote gender equality is crucial insofar as it must challenge existing gender power relations and hierarchies. Measures that include men and boys in these processes must go beyond mere “allyship” to entail a fundamental shift in the gender order. Addressing gender stereotypes that are harmful to people of all genders and are at the root of gendered hierarchies and patriarchal structures should be a priority.

Language suggestions for the Zero Draft

- **Section (13)** add “negatively affects all genders and can threaten..”



- **Section (15)** replace “full engagement of men and boys” with “the necessity to actively include people of all genders, including men and boys, for transformative action and the promotion of women’s full and effective...”
- **Section (12)** include “promote equal sharing in the household, specifically between men and women to normalize paternity leave and men’s role in childcare”