

24 APRIL 2021

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF MULTILATERALISM AND DIPLOMACY FOR PEACE

MULTILATERALISM BY WOMEN

www.gwlvoices.com



#GWL | **VOICES**
FOR CHANGE & INCLUSION

Today, **24 April, in celebration of the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace**, we, the members of GWL Voices, reaffirm our commitment to building a stronger multilateral system.

Multilateralism, cooperation, and concerted action are more needed than ever as we define policy options and economic and financial arrangements to recover and rebuild our societies after the multiple and sobering effects of the COVID19 pandemic. The best way to address this health crisis is closely linked to the health of our multilateral system.

We are 54 women who have worked in governments and in multilateral organizations in support of promoting humanitarian relief, advocating for human rights principles and normative policies, advancing sustainable development, and resolving some of the world's most complex conflicts. **We have found through years of experience that it is thanks to the multilateral system, that the world is advancing in the key areas of concern: peace and security, human rights, condition of women, public health, etc..** However, the pace of progress remains slow and the gains have been put at risk by the recent attacks against multilateral institutions. As women, we need to highlight that this is particularly true in the case of women rights and gender equality.

"THE PACE OF PROGRESS REMAINS SLOW AND THE GAINS HAVE BEEN PUT AT RISK BY THE RECENT ATTACKS AGAINST MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS [...]. PARTICULARLY TRUE IN THE CASE OF WOMEN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY."

The COVID19 pandemic is testing the limits of the multilateral system in delivering public goods, in particular the human right to health: geopolitical competition among powerful states and the defense of the economic interests of transnational corporations is jeopardizing the equal and universal access to COVID19 vaccines. As a result, many of the about 3 million deaths could have been avoided with a more adequate multilateral response.

Justified concerns about unchecked globalization have mutated into a backlash against the very principles that give power to the people, such as human rights, gender equality and social justice, including humanitarian crises and inadmissible violence against women in conflict zones, such as the recent horrific events in Tigray and the regress in democratic advances in Myanmar.

We are seeing a rise of nationalist sentiment,

in extremism, in attacks of international law and norms. This is creating a difficult environment for the decisions we need to take in the coming months and years. Just when we need multilateralism more than ever, global cooperation is being undermined in some quarters.

"JUST WHEN WE NEED MULTILATERALISM MORE THAN EVER, GLOBAL COOPERATION IS BEING UNDERMINED IN SOME QUARTERS."





Our multilateral architecture which is built around the United Nations System needs to be reformed in order to better address the structural inequalities that affect the world and respond to the global, multidimensional threats that humanity is facing. **A reinforced and functional multilateralism is essential to deliver peace and stability, human security and sustainable development for all.** We are convinced that strengthening multilateralism is, at the same time, the best tool to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement and accelerate the gender equality agenda through the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda established in UN Security Resolution 1325.

They are the product of years of negotiations, of research and analysis, of the biggest stakeholder consultation in UN history. They offer hope and guidance. They address many of the factors fueling dissatisfaction with the international system, from material deprivation to poor governance. Implementing them will do more to convince people of the value of multilateralism, than any speech or campaign as we recover from COVID19.

The efforts for recovering from the COVID19 crisis offer a golden opportunity to galvanize our commitment with multilateralism, and to change the way we do business. It is a chance to make the UN more effective, more transparent, more accountable and more relevant to “We the peoples”.

It is also an opportunity to make progress on addressing four major deficits in the UN system:

First, **the democracy deficit**, which has seen the Global South in general, and Africa in particular, underrepresented – most prominently in the Security Council, of course, but also in international financial institutions. But it is also how we involve all segments of society in the decisions that lead to global commitments and their implementation at national level.

Second, **the deficit in the “equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small”**, which we see in the divide between those who mandate peace operations and those who put their citizens' lives on the line, or in our approach to refugees – developing countries host the lion's share, over 80%, while rich countries are reluctant to accept significant numbers.

Third, **the stakeholder deficit**. Our multilateral system has not found meaningful ways to include the multitude of actors – parliamentarians, local government, civil society, the private sector, trade unions, youth, cities – in global decision-making and delivery. Often, these actors are better placed to engage with constituencies, build public support for sustainable lifestyles and to provide services. It is time we redefined what we mean by a truly global partnership.

And fourth, **the communications deficit**. The UN has still not found ways to capture the public's imagination, to tell success stories and communicate its challenges. The UN is yet to provide meaningful answers to those who have lost faith in the international system, and to push back against those who peddle misinformation.





We need to move from words to actions. This commemoration must reaffirm the values and principles of gender equality, international cooperation and collective action, sovereign equality of states, self-determination of peoples, the prohibition of the threat and use of force in international relations, the universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the protection of our ecosystems and the compliance with international law.



Strengthening multilateralism and international cooperation by **revisiting the procedures and distribution of power of the institutions** within the United Nations System and the regional integration mechanisms



Democratizing the multilateral system by **increasing the representation of all social actors in the discussions and decision-making processes**, in particular of those more vulnerable that have been traditionally marginalized and excluded from international politics



Promoting more **equality within states and among states** in order to end poverty, hunger, corruption, gender discrimination, violence, human rights abuses and conflict



Increasing **transparency and accountability** in the multilateral system

This is our chance to overhaul the multilateral engine; to convince and convert the sceptics, and to multiply its supporters. We cannot miss it!

ABOUT GWL VOICES

GWL Voices for Change and Inclusion brought together women who, as part of their individual profiles and professional trajectories, have forged significant contributions from the unifying perspective of multilateral agendas for promoting humanitarian relief, advocating for human rights principles and normative policies, advancing sustainable development, and seeking to lend solution to some of the world's most complex conflicts and challenges.

OUR OBJECTIVE



Call attention to and create awareness of the need to achieve full gender equality and empowerment of women across all ambits of society and the critical importance of multilateralism as a vehicle in support of this core objective towards building more inclusive and equitable societies.



DISCOVER OUR ACTIONS

#GWLvoices

