

Tuesday, 16 August 2022

High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism Public Consultation

Governance and Multilateralism:

Advancing gender equality, and the full, effective, meaningful and substantive empowerment, participation and leadership of women and girls, in all their diversity.

- **What are the areas of global concern where governance improvements are most needed?**

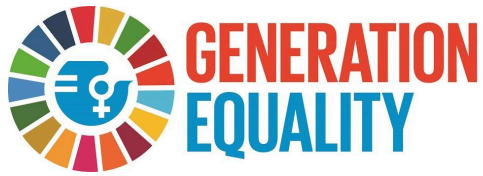
This submission is on behalf of the UN Women National Gender Youth Advocates (NGYAs). We are a network of over 300 global youth who are championing gender equality in all regions of the world. With the support of UN Women, we work at the grassroots, local, national, regional and international levels, to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls and youth, in all their diversities, are fully, effectively, meaningfully and substantively centred across all efforts, processes and decision-making, at all levels.

Recognising the principles, processes and outcomes of the Generation Equality Forums, Journey and Agenda convened by UN Women in a multi-stakeholder manner, as well as the Young Feminist Manifesto, it is crucial for governance improvements to be implemented concerning advancing gender equality, and the full, effective, meaningful and substantive empowerment, participation and leadership of women and girls, in all their diversity and intersectional identities.

This means acknowledging that the global issues we are facing today, from conflict to climate change and the 'triple planetary crisis', the COVID-19 pandemic, the education crisis, organized crime, and many more - disproportionality and will continue to adversely impact women, girls and youth in all their diversity in existing and future generations.

It is clear that gender inequalities are deeply rooted in our global socio-economic and political structures, societies, and systems. Nearly all dimensions of life have been constructed in this way – created to maintain power imbalances and uphold patriarchal ideas. Gender inequality is about history, structural racism and discrimination, politics, and economics - all broad topics that have hundreds of years of theories, work, data, research, and cultural context to them.

We must invest and substantially increase governance efforts that are built on the foundational principles of intergenerational solidarity and accountability, acting as bold and comprehensive mechanisms that monitor, evaluate and improve the response of global stakeholders in advancing gender equality across all



its intersections. In this regard, all governance processes across the UN system, and beyond, must adopt the principles of feminist leadership, ensuring young women, girls and adolescents, in all their diversity, are meaningfully and substantively included and participating as co-leaders, co-creators and co-owners across all processes, at all levels.

Therefore, we call for the urgent need to increase and significantly advance efforts to achieve gender equality including, while not being exhaustive, *inter alia*, centring and promoting the full, effective, meaningful and substantive inclusion, engagement and participation of women, girls and youth, in all their diversity across all efforts, procedures and decision-making, at all levels; addressing sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination, including in the context of conflict and climate change; contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons, especially of women and children; the gender-digital divide; the full, safe and equitable access to sexual and reproductive health and rights; dismantling harmful patriarchal laws and cultural and social norms; realizing gender-transformative education; and addressing in more broad terms, the root, structural causes that contribute to gender inequalities.

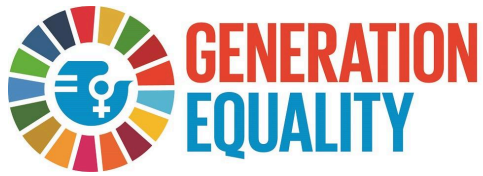
Gender equality in its entirety must be one of the foundational pillars upon which governance improvements are built. It must be centred, and the considerations must be bold, concrete and transformative to ensure that all human rights of all women and girls, in all their diversity are respected, promoted, protected and fulfilled, truly leaving no one behind.

- **What governance improvements could be achieved?**

To improve and initiate new governance systems that advance gender equality, multi-stakeholder, internationally coordinated, intergenerational and intersectional approaches must be implemented, shedding light on the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that are experienced by many women and girls because of their identities, realities, backgrounds, and unequal access to power and resources, and thus, address them. It requires recognizing the unique challenges faced by people who experience intersecting forms of discrimination and the power dynamics and systems that reinforce them, and meaningfully and intentionally working to counter them.

The Generation Equality Forums convened by UN Women have highlighted the impact multi-stakeholder governance processes can have on driving concrete change. The leadership of the Generation Equality Youth Task Force, Civil Society Advisory Group, and more recently, UN Women's Generation Equality Commitment Maker Accountability Mechanism and governance structure, are baseline examples of how these inclusive approaches of governance can be effective to advance gender equality.

However, these Generation Equality processes have had their limitations and have remained confined to UN Women's mandate. Through analyzing best practices and areas for improvement, it is proposed that the following governance improvements and expansions are made concerning advancing gender equality:



All governance structures and multilateralism efforts across the entire UN system must embody feminist leadership that aims to explicitly and intentionally redistribute power and responsibility in a way that is inclusive, participatory, and mindful of gender, age, race, social class, sexual orientation, ability and other intersecting identities. This involves a continuous commitment to keep vigilant about – and challenge – the (re)production of practices and behaviours that deter collaboration, proactive listening and that benefit a few at the expense of others.

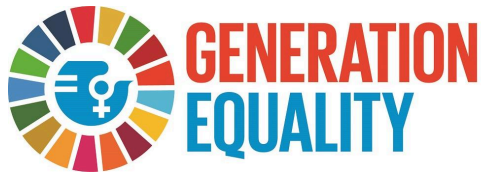
Moreover, governance must seek to transform structures, systems and power that reinforce inequalities as an end goal. In doing so, this must seek to build a collective vision through approaches that value co-creation, dialogue, shared perspective, and centring the voices of historically marginalized groups. Youth leadership, especially of women and girls in all their diversity, is critical to the transformative vision of governance.

We, therefore, call on the High-Level Advisory Board to support the co-creation of an intergenerational and intersectional UN-system-wide Advisory Group on Gender Equality, comprising of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Member States, UN Women and UN Women National Gender Youth Advocates (NGYAs), that oversees, monitors and evaluates the implementation of the “Our Common Agenda” from a young feminist and gender perspective, and reports directly to the Secretary-General. This group can expand, build upon and improve the modalities used by UN Women when forming their advisory bodies during the Generation Equality processes.

- **How could the international community seek more equity, fairness, and effectiveness in multilateral decision-making?**

Any improvements in governments or increase in multilateralism efforts must centre young women, girls and youth, in all their diversity and intersectional identities, in decision-making and efforts, across all levels. We, therefore, propose the following recommendations on how the international community can seek more equity, fairness, and effectiveness in multilateral decision-making:

1. *Center* the full, effective, meaningful and substantive inclusion, engagement, participation and leadership of women, girls and youth, in all their diversity and intersectional identities of gender and sexual orientation and expression, across all efforts and decision-making, and at all levels.
2. *Adopt* a feminist leadership approach that explicitly and intentionally redistributes power and responsibility in a way that is inclusive and participatory, taking into account gender, age, race, social class, caste, sexual orientation, ability, Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent and other intersecting identities.



3. *Promote* practices and behaviours that foster intergenerational and feminist collaboration and cocreation, and proactive listening that benefits all young people, especially young women and girls and young people marginalised along the axes of sexual orientation, gender expression and identity.
4. *Take* concrete action to transform youth participation and youth engagement into meaningful, inclusive and substantive youth leadership and co-ownership, providing youth in all their diversity, especially young women and girls, with co-leading, co-creating power, decision-making as well as agenda-setting power, ensuring youth in all their diversity are being valued as equal partners across all decision-making and efforts, as co-leaders, co-creators and co-owners.
5. *Call on* the General Assembly to adopt a new resolution entitled ‘Meaningful and Inclusive Youth Participation’ that aims to institutionalize and concretize the full, effective, meaningful and substantive inclusion, engagement and participation, of young people in all their diversity across the UN system, and at all levels, supporting the principles of the establishment of the UN Youth Office, acknowledging the significant contribution and value of young women and girls as leaders in efforts and decision-making.
6. *Reaffirm* the Generation Equality Forum’s 5-year action journey to implement the agreed actions outlined in the Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality and reaffirm their commitment to the Global Acceleration Plan by UN Women and Generation Equality Partners.
7. *Reaffirm further* the important contribution of youth, in all their diversity, especially women and girls, in addressing the ‘triple planetary crisis’, building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic, and maintaining and promoting the peace and security agendas.