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A Feminist Food for Thought Paper Second World Summit for Social Development (WSSD2)

Recent data indicates that the world is currently off track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality.¹ The Second World Summit for Social Development presents an opportunity to redefine our collective commitment to getting us back on track and address the gaps of implementing the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action and to spur gender equality. This 'Feminist Food for Thought Paper', co-created by Generation Equality Leaders and Commitment Makers, provides a set of concrete, actionable, and gender-transformative recommendations that center the lived realities of women and girls, in all their diversity, while challenging entrenched systems of power and oppression that perpetuate inequality.

Grounded in the principles of human rights, intersectionality, and inclusivity, this paper calls for a paradigm shift to realize gender justice. It calls for transformative policies that dismantle patriarchal structures, redistribute power and resources, and foster the full, effective, equal, and meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls, in all their diversity.

In addressing the substantive elements and structure of the **Political Declaration**, **this contribution underscores the urgent need to ensure gender equality and human rights are cross-cutting.** These recommendations amplify feminist priorities that are intersectional and span across all dimensions of social development, including economic justice and rights, care economies, climate justice, and ending gender-based violence. It asserts that social progress cannot be achieved without respecting human rights, addressing the root causes of inequality, and embracing the diversity of experiences and leadership of those that are historically marginalised, silenced, and excluded.

This is a call to action, encouraging Member States to place gender equality, human rights, and feminist principles at the heart of the Political Declaration and to agree on a concrete, action-oriented, and transformative outcome that leaves no one behind, gets us back on track to achieve gender equality and strive to meet the promise of the Copenhagen Declaration and 2030 Agenda.

Food for Thought for the Political Declaration – Advancing Feminist Principles for Social Development:

1. Human Rights, Gender Equality, and Disability Inclusion as Cross-Cutting Principles:

The Political Declaration must embed human rights, gender equality, and disability inclusion as non-negotiable, cross-cutting principles. Building on the Copenhagen Declaration's commitment to human dignity and equality, Member States must ensure that every policy, program, and framework explicitly addresses intersecting forms of discrimination. The declaration should commit to dismantling systemic barriers while advancing rights-based, gender-transformative, and inclusive approaches that center the experiences of women, girls, and persons with disabilities, in all their diversity, across all areas of social development.

¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/resources/gender-snapshot>



2. **Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR):** Recognizing the Copenhagen Declaration's emphasis on health as a cornerstone of social development, the Political Declaration must protect and expand unimpeded access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and bodily autonomy. This entails guaranteeing universal access to contraceptives, comprehensive sexuality education, safe and legal abortion, menstrual health and hygiene, and maternal health services. Member States must also address the gendered impacts of restrictive policies and prioritize the elimination of gender-based violence and harmful practices such as child, early, and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
3. **Participation of civil society and young people:** To ensure an inclusive and transparent process leading up to the Second World Summit for Social Development, the full, effective, and meaningful participation of civil society and young people, including organizations in and not in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, must be institutionalized across all processes, including across intergovernmental processes and consultations.
4. **Economic Justice and Rights:** Reaffirming the Copenhagen Declaration's commitment to eradicating poverty, the Political Declaration must prioritize feminist economic frameworks that address systemic inequalities. This includes eliminating the feminization of poverty, implementing progressive tax systems to ensure tax justice, guaranteeing equal pay for work of equal value, expanding access to decent work for women and marginalized persons, upholding all labour rights, in line with International Labour Organization standards and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, including freedom of association and collective bargaining, and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work through state-supported care infrastructures. Member States must also ensure universal social protection systems that are gender-transformative and disability-inclusive.
5. **Feminist Action for Climate Justice:** Building on the Copenhagen Declaration's focus on sustainable development, the Political Declaration must integrate a feminist climate agenda that centers the leadership of women, girls, and marginalized groups in climate decision-making. This includes investing in gender-transformative climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, supporting Indigenous women and communities, including their leadership and enjoyment of rights, and ensuring equitable access to resources and technologies for climate resilience.
6. **Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality:** To address digital divides and harness technology for social development, the Political Declaration must commit to end the gender-digital divide and advance gender equality and human rights online and offline. Member States should ensure universal access to affordable internet and digital literacy programs, throughout the life course, while combating online harassment, abuse, and violence, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Member States must also promote the full, effective, and meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls, in all their diversity in STEM fields and create safeguards to prevent biases in artificial intelligence and other technologies.
7. **Feminist Movements and Leadership:** The Political Declaration should prioritize funding, protecting, and amplifying feminist movements and women and girl-led organizations,



aligning with the Copenhagen Declaration's commitment to strengthening civil society. This includes dedicating resources to organisations working on social development at the local, national, regional and global levels, safeguarding civic spaces, and promoting women's and girls' leadership in decision-making processes across political, economic, social, and cultural spheres.

8. **Ending Gender-Based Violence:** In alignment with the Copenhagen Declaration's commitment to human dignity and equality, the Political Declaration must include comprehensive, survivor-centered approaches to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence. Governments should strengthen legal frameworks, ensure the accessibility of justice systems, ensure perpetrators are held accountable, and fund gender-transformative services, including shelters, counseling, and rehabilitation programs.
9. **Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) and Humanitarian Action:** Recognizing the unique vulnerabilities of women and girls in conflict and crisis situations, the Political Declaration must ensure women's full, effective, and meaningful participation in peacebuilding processes, integrating gender-transformative approaches in humanitarian responses, and addressing the disproportionate impacts of conflict, displacement, and disasters on women, girls and marginalized persons, in all their diversity. Member States must also prioritize funding for women and girl-led peacebuilding organizations and guarantee the protection of human rights and environmental defenders.