

**Declaration on Gender Equality,
G7 Ministers, Paris, May 10th 2019**

1. Gender equality is fundamental to the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights. It is essential for resilient, inclusive and fair societies. It has been an increasing focus in recent years through successive G7 presidencies. We, the Ministers of the G7 in charge of gender equality, today commit to strong outcomes for the empowerment of women and girls.
2. By working towards achieving gender equality in practice, we are taking action to boost inclusive and sustainable growth in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Despite an overall reduction in the gender gaps over the past decades, progress has considerably slowed down across the world. No country has achieved gender equality to date. The 2018 *Global Gender Gap Report* of the World Economic Forum estimates that based on current trends it will take 108 years to close existing gender gaps.
3. In this context, we recall the importance of achieving gender equality at all levels and in all social, political and economic spheres. To reach this objective, we recall the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for action (BPfA, 1995) and its report, and acknowledge the significance of the wider international human rights framework, including for the States Parties to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). We, Ministers of the G7, welcome the organisation of the Global Forum on Beijing +25 in Paris in 2020.
4. Inclusive laws are one of the key enablers for equality between women and men. In its 2019 report on “Women, Business and the Law”, the World Bank highlights the extent to which legislative barriers represent a significant obstacle to women’s empowerment in world economies.
5. We recognize that effective implementation and enforcement of laws accompanied by relevant policies, funding, and dedicated oversight mechanisms can be a powerful force

for the empowerment of women and girls. We are also encouraged by efforts to enact new and innovative laws around the world and by existing laws that provide effective frameworks for the empowerment of women and girls. We therefore acknowledge that good practices in this regard can be a source of inspiration for greater progress and seek to encourage such practices.

6. We commend the decisive role of women leaders, women human rights defenders and civil society organizations in courageously supporting health, safety, and equal rights, participation and equal opportunities of women and girls around the world, in some cases at great personal risk. We call for women's fair share and meaningful inclusion in all decision-making processes, from political life to peace processes. We stand with civil society leaders who defend the rights of women and girls and unequivocally condemn the threats and violence they might face because of their action.
7. In this context, we welcome the ongoing opportunity for an open and interactive dialogue with civil society organisations, including those gathered at the Women 7 (W7) summit. We appreciate our exchange with the W7 on its recommendations.
8. We appreciate the expertise and leadership of the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council, which was founded by Canada and renewed in 2019 by France, in supporting the G7 to consider the needs and perspectives of women and girls in its work. We recognize its valuable contribution this year to the identification of innovative laws and good practices around the world.
9. Women's economic empowerment is central to realizing women's rights and equality with men. Increasing women and girls' access to quality education, learning and vocational training contributes to women's economic empowerment and to economic growth. However, women face multiple inequalities in achieving economic empowerment. Globally and in all G7 countries, women are frequently still paid less than men for the same work and for work of equal value, have less access to financial resources needed for developing entrepreneurship, and tend to spend two to ten times more time on unpaid care than men do. We recall the ongoing importance of the "2X

Challenge” and our development finance institutions’ work to mobilize 3 billion USD to women-owned, women-led and women-supporting enterprises around the world.

10. In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, all forms of gender-based violence must be eliminated. This includes intimate partner abuse, sexual violence, sexual violence in conflict, child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilations as well as online violence, abuse and harassment. Gender-based violence violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women and girls of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and critically affect their dignity and integrity. We condemn all forms of violence, abuse, and discrimination against women and girls and remain concerned about the growing problem of sexual and gender-based violence, abuse and harassment in digital contexts. We reaffirm our commitment to advancing gender equality as well as preventing and responding to all forms of gender-based violence.
11. Gender stereotypes affect women and girls in their enjoyment of social and economic rights. Providing safe and quality education is crucial. It empowers girls and boys to become active and informed participants in the transformation of their societies. The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is critical to women’s empowerment in other spheres of their lives and the full realization of their human rights.
12. We therefore support education that empowers adolescents to minimize sexual risks and prevents unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, thereby improving the opportunity to thrive into adulthood. Achieving better health for women and girls is linked to the success of other key goals including reducing poverty and inequality, increasing economic empowerment and promoting women’s participation in political and economic decisions.
13. We recall the importance of mainstreaming gender equality across the G7’s various ministerial meetings by taking into account the perspectives of women and girls in their conclusions and acknowledge the importance of fully implementing, enforcing and following-up their commitments.

14. Through its leadership, the G7 has the unique ability to create a political momentum and to promote practices that prohibit discriminations against women and girls so their communities and societies reach their full potential.

15. **As Ministers for gender Equality of the G7 and signatories of the “Paris Declaration on Gender Equality”, we therefore commit to:**

Advocate for more laws and effective policies that promote women’s human rights and gender equality:

Enhancing gender equality through legal, regulatory, and policy reforms will promote an enabling environment for women’s empowerment. We agree to work towards a *Partnership for Gender Equality*, with support from the Gender Equality Advisory Council, aimed at making individual commitments towards improving the legal and policy framework, with a view toward creating a global coalition committed to the full empowerment of girls and women through the implementation of laws that protect and promote equality and women’s rights. This partnership will involve G7 members and partner countries.

Promote women’s entrepreneurship in Africa:

16. Women are active entrepreneurs in the world and yet their access to finance is particularly limited. Women-led small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and microenterprises face particular financial difficulties due to discrimination in property rights and the lack of collateral guarantees. These issues are often exacerbated for African women as they also suffer from specific difficulties, structural socio-economic barriers such as digital exclusion, limited access to education and skills development, and control over assets, including lack of access to financial services, markets and networks. While women dominate the micro enterprise sector, only 16 to 20 percent of women in sub-Saharan Africa have access to formal finance.

17. Improving women's entrepreneurship in Africa requires increased and sustained action aimed at fighting discrimination and creating an enabling environment that better supports women's economic empowerment. This includes addressing the barriers that limit women's access to financing. Overcoming these obstacles will empower African women entrepreneurs to make the transition from micro businesses to SMEs.
18. We therefore reaffirm our support to the work of G7 assisting African countries in their efforts to remove obstacles to women's entrepreneurship, including social, legal and regulatory barriers and discriminatory norms, and to improve women's access to finance through efficient mechanisms that allow non-discriminatory and more effective access to finance and economic opportunities for all.
19. We resolve to work together with governments, the private sector, civil society organizations and foundations active in the area of women's entrepreneurship in Africa, in their efforts to improve access to finance for women-led micro and small, businesses with growth potential to support their transition from micro to small and from small to medium-size enterprises. In order to target existing gaps a mapping of underserved groups and/or countries should identify unmet needs.
20. G7 efforts should complement and strengthen existing programmes. In this context, we welcome global and regional initiatives that target women entrepreneurs. This includes, in particular, the further development of the Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA) led by the African Development Bank. We appreciate the work of the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi), launched at the margins of the G20 in 2017, in Africa and beyond.

Increase attention to address sexual and gender-based violence, abuse and harassment in digital contexts:

21. Ending violence against girls and women benefits all and is a shared responsibility in which everyone, including men and boys, has a critical role to play. We are resolved to

end all forms of gender-based violence and strive for a future where the same rights and fundamental freedoms that individuals have offline are also protected online. Online violence cannot be separated from other types of violence against women and girls. Like intimate partnership violence, it is rooted in gender inequality, discriminatory social norms and unequal power relations.

22. Online violence, harassment and abuse of women and girls constitute an alarming phenomenon of global proportion. It undermines women and girls' human rights as well as their safety and personal integrity both off and online, and limits their ability to access resources online that could otherwise accelerate their economic, educational and social development. We welcome and encourage growing attention and research on this issue within civil society, academia, the private sector, multilateral organizations, and governments.

23. Building on the *G7 Roadmap for a Gender-responsive Economic Environment*, we recognize the importance of partnership and increased dialogue with Internet companies and relevant stakeholders to develop joint initiatives that address this issue while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, and the dignity of women and girls.

24. These initiatives should aim, inter alia, at encouraging the following:

- improving clarity with regard to the type of content which is considered illegal under national law or otherwise abusive or harassing against women and girls;
- increasing visibility and understanding of reporting procedures for content that is considered violent or abusive against women and girls, including appropriate follow-up mechanisms;
- promoting effective steps for companies to keep their users safe, including measures that ensure transparency and effective reporting of content that is considered violent or abusive against women and girls, by means of easy to access, and user-friendly mechanisms;

- encouraging working partnerships between social media platforms and specialized civil society organisations to collaborate on solutions including flagging illegal or otherwise abusive or harassing content under national law, including fast procedures for assessing requests and reducing periods of exposure to such content, in a manner that respects freedom of expression. We therefore urge the platforms to remove illegal content from public display in an expedient timeframe;
- requiring social media platforms to cooperate with law enforcement in criminal investigations and proceedings in full compliance with due process;
- ensuring that individuals' rights and in particular their freedom of expression and information are respected online. Due diligence measures include, among other: ensuring that removal decisions are well founded, informing the content provider of the removal of their content, making available procedures for the content provider to contest the removal decision, taking appropriate measures against bad faith reports.

25. We call for the full participation of affected women and girls in discussions of this issue to help ensure that responses empower, rather than marginalize, those who have been most affected by this form of violence, abuse and harassment. We commit to increasing voluntary dialogue with the private sector and relevant actors including youth, affected women and girls and civil society to develop innovative and operational solutions that address this growing issue.