

## **Heads of States, Leaders and Activists take Bold Action to Accelerate Gender Equality and Address the Consequences of Covid-19 for Women and Girls:**

### **Generation Equality Forum to drive Major Policy Reforms and Generate over \$40 Billion in New Investments**

PARIS – 30, 2021 JUNE: Heads of State and Government, heads of international organizations, activists from civil society and youth-led organizations, philanthropists and CEOs of private sector companies gathered today for the opening of the Generation Equality Forum held from 30 June to 2 July in Paris. The Forum launched a [Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality](#), driven by six Action Coalitions, and launched a Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, with the aim to accelerate gender equality in the next five years and to face the growing risks to women's rights caused by Covid-19. The Forum's projected \$40 billion of new investments will represent the largest-ever collective infusion of resources into global gender equality.

The event marks the most significant international convening for gender equality since the 1995 Women's Conference in Beijing. The Forum was opened by the cohosts, President of France, Emmanuel Macron and Mexico's President, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, as well as by UN Secretary General António Guterres and convener of the Forum, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women. Notable speakers at the opening event also included Vice President of the United States, Kamala Harris, President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, Nobel laureate Nadia Murad, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and Tunisian feminist Aya Chebbi. The ceremony was centered on the voice of civil society activists and women's rights defenders and featured long-term advocate for gender equality and Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in an intergenerational dialogue with climate activist Julieta Martinez.

The Forum focuses on concrete commitments and has a sharp focus on implementation and financing gender equality. During the opening event, major commitments were announced by the Heads of State and Government of France, the United States of America, Kenya, Argentina, Georgia, Finland, Canada, Germany, South Africa, the European Union and from international organizations and private sector. The commitments included:

- **\$40 billion+ in new investments benefitting women and girls**, with government commitments over the three days expected to total \$17 billion. At the Opening Ceremony, a \$2.1 billion commitment from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to advance women's leadership, reproductive health, and economic empowerment was announced alongside a \$420 million investment from the Ford Foundation to tackle threats to women's rights caused by COVID-19. The World Bank committed to a major investment for programmes in 12 African States to tackle gender inequalities.
- **The implementations of major policy reforms and programs to advance gender equality.** The President of Kenya announced a national strategy and resources to prevent and respond to Gender-Based Violence. The Prime Minister of Canada presented the country's commitment to invest in a care system to benefit women and girls and the President of Georgia presented her commitment to lead legislative change on the legal definition of rape. The Vice President of the United States made policy and resource commitments on gender-based violence, women's economic security, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- **The launch of new coordination mechanisms** to advance key issues for gender equality, such as a new Global Alliance on Care and an Alliance to Fund Sustainable Feminist Movements.

President Macron, speaking live from Paris underscored his commitment to confronting the gender equality crisis, saying, *“Through the Generation Equality Forum, France’s objective is to state loud and clear that the rights of women and girls are universal, as are all human rights, everywhere, all the time. This model that France defends is not a negation of our differences. It is about reaffirming that no cultural or religious relativism, no regional or identity-based particularism, justifies that a woman cannot enjoy the same rights and the same opportunities as a man. Our method for achieving this result is concerted international action, what I have called multilateralism through action.”* The French government committed \$100 million to improve access to contraceptives and family planning.

UN Secretary General António Guterres, speaking live in Paris, welcomed the bold ambition of the Forum saying that the Forum was a moment *“to redress a global imbalance, with activists, policymakers, and leaders across all ages shaping our world into a more just and gender-equal society.”*

Also speaking live in Paris, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, noted that *“This is a new chapter for gender equality. Those with a world view of radical impatience are converging to create big, well-resourced changes. Together we will revitalize the unfinished Beijing agenda, united by the conviction that we must take risks and do things differently.”*

Over the following two days of the Forum major others financial, policy and program commitments are expected from over 1,000 diverse commitment-makers. Additional philanthropy commitments are expected from the Co-Impact Fund, CIFF, Foundation Chanel, Global Green Grants, the Women’s Funding Network and the Open Societies Foundation. Major private sector contributors will include P&G, Unilever, PayPal and Estee Lauder. A significant number of civil society and youth led commitments will be made; for example, GirlsForClimate will commit to establish over 100 local climate hubs in Uganda, Cameroon Digital Rights Campaign will announce advocacy and policy work to end digital divides and the Egyptian Feminist Union will commit to work on equal rights to divorce and guardianship of children for divorced women. Additional member states announcing commitments will include Armenia, Burkina Faso, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Germany Iceland, Finland, North Macedonia, Malawi, the Maldives, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Mexico, Rwanda, Spain, Sweden, Tunisia, the United Kingdom and Uruguay.

The Forum includes over 110 events designed to propel action on gender equality, including a youth-led stage. Sessions aligned to the Action Coalitions – the six most catalytic actions required to accelerate gender equality, including economic justice, gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, impact of the climate emergency on women and girls, need for digital and technology inclusion and support to feminist movements and leadership – are also a key component of the event agenda, as is the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action.

The Paris Forum is expected to draw over 40,000 virtual participants. Confirmed speakers across the 3-day virtual event include President of Rwanda Paul Kagame, Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Melinda French Gates, Brazilian Rapper MC Soffia and Actor and UN Women Goodwill Ambassador Anne Hathaway.

The Forum in Paris marks the launch of a 5-year journey designed to accelerate gender equality and a turning point in the international community commitment for women’s rights.

