

Rideau Institute Submission to GAC Consultation on a Feminist Foreign Policy

The Rideau Institute is a civil society organization dedicated to revitalizing Canada's peacekeeping, diplomatic peacemaking and peacebuilding roles in the world, through creative, innovative and inclusive multilateralism, strengthening the UN capacity for conflict prevention and peaceful conflict resolution and the progressive enhancement of international law. We welcome the opportunity to provide input into this consultation and our brief will address issues which we believe merit particular attention in formulating a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP): i) conceptual understanding; ii) conflict prevention; iii) disarmament; iv) peacekeeping and peacebuilding. (This brief echoes the submission made separately by the Canadian Pugwash Group with the addition here of a paragraph on peacebuilding.)

Conceptual Understanding:

It is important that a FFP is situated in a broader context of an approach to peace and security defined by the concepts of sustainability and commonality. This in turn is rooted in active commitments to a rules-based international system, the peaceful settlement of disputes, global cooperation, respect for human rights and a security concept that places the security of humans at its core. **A FFP should progress beyond the focus on increasing the participation of women in conflict resolution and peace operations, to devise *policies* that promote sustainable peace and common security.** In this way the threats to women and girls as well as humans generally can be mitigated or eliminated.

Conflict Prevention:

The prevention of conflict should be prioritized in a FFP over the management of conflict. Government funding should prioritize support for diplomatic and civil society conflict prevention over military expenditure. Greater investment needs to be made in developing effective responses to indicators of imminent violence. Canada in concert with like-minded countries and partners in civil society should work on a variety of tools for early intervention into situations that threaten organized violence. Support for monitoring mechanisms that can warn of impending crises could be one dimension of a conflict prevention strategy. **A FFP should provide for robust mediation capacities which can be deployed to seek peaceful settlements of disputes before they boil over.**

Disarmament:

Disarmament as a domain of action for a FFP has been absent to date from the Government's statements. The *Scene Setting* document prepared for this consultation has acknowledged "arms control" and "non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction" as possible new areas of attention, but actual "disarmament" needs also to figure amongst the objectives of a FFP. Especially in light of the differential impact on women and girls of violence perpetrated by weapons, increased diplomatic engagement by Canada to control and eliminate problematic weapon systems is needed. It is not simply the risk of WMD-proliferation that is a threat, but

the very existence of these weapons. **A FFP should include Canada's accession to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, after taking the action nationally and within NATO to enable this.**

Peacekeeping:

Restore Canada's past high-level support for UN peacekeeping by increasing military, police and civilian contributions including offering mission commanders. Not a single general has been offered as a UN force commander since the 1990s. From a high of 3,300 person contribution in the 1990s we are currently contributing only 34 uniformed peacekeepers. This situation does not accord with the Government's promise to re-engage in UN peacekeeping.

Although Canada has already undertaken several contributions to increasing the role of women in peace operations, such as via the *Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations*, a greater effort is needed in terms of Canada's own contribution of female personnel to UN missions (currently only 8 uniformed women are deployed). It has been shown that missions with a significant contingent of women can better connect with local communities and acquire critical information and intelligence. Canada should nominate a woman general for UN service as a Force Commander or Deputy Commander. A revival of realist training for Canadian participation in UN multidimensional peace operation is needed, as the Canadian Forces only provide half the peacekeeping training that it did 15 years ago. Besides augmented participation there needs to be a greater focus on the policy context in which peace operations occur. In particular more attention should be placed on devising mandates and mission mechanisms for the effective protection of civilians during operations, especially given the disproportionate gendered-impact of violence against civilians. **As part of a comprehensive FFP effort to render UN peacekeeping more efficient and effective, Canada could lead in promoting the use of technological aids by missions and the development of rapid response mechanisms to promptly counter threats to peace operations.**

The most effective protection of civilians is a durable peace. The "value added" of UN peacekeeping is the centrality of the peace process. **There is a need to renew efforts, at all levels, from the Security Council to individual UN member states including potential troop contributors like Canada, to support and enhance efforts to place a political solution, and the UN's pre-eminent role in facilitating it, at the heart of all of the work of a peace operation.**

Peacebuilding:

In successive authoritative documents the UN and other multilateral organizations have recognized that peacebuilding, including institution and capacity-building, is essential to sustaining peace. Such activities, as part of the peace continuum, must also address the causes and drivers of conflict, with particular attention to political inclusion as a core principle.

As current co-chair of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, Canada co-leads efforts to strengthen the UN's peacebuilding architecture – notably by coordinating UN and international financial

institutions' work on economic policies for inclusive peace. **Accordingly, Canada should better align its own policies to give primacy to political inclusion over support for privileged elites.**

In our view, a FFP to constitute effective and credible guidance for action will require incorporating some of the elements flagged above. The FFP should also allow for regular monitoring and evaluation as to the effectiveness of its intended actions in order to provide an empirical basis for adjustments in the future and as an accountability tool.

Submitted on behalf of the Rideau Institute by its President Peggy Mason.

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