

# Feminist Foreign Policy

NEDWORC, 21 June 2022

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Based on findings from research studies with Barbara van Paassen for MFA (on behalf of ResultsInHealth/Ecorys) and for WO=MEN & experience with Canada's FFP (Saskia); & studies, perspectives and principles from various feminist movements (Jan)

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# Introduction

- What is a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP)?
- What are the opportunities and challenges?
- What could an FFP mean for your work?

# Context: countries

- ❖ More countries with an FFP or FFP announcement
- ❖ May 2022: the Netherlands' commitment for an FFP



[Letter of 13 May 2022 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation to the Senate on the added value for the Netherlands of a feminist foreign policy](#)

# What is an FFP & why do countries choose to have an FFP

What is an FFP?

**High Level Political Commitment for all sectors of Foreign Affairs.**

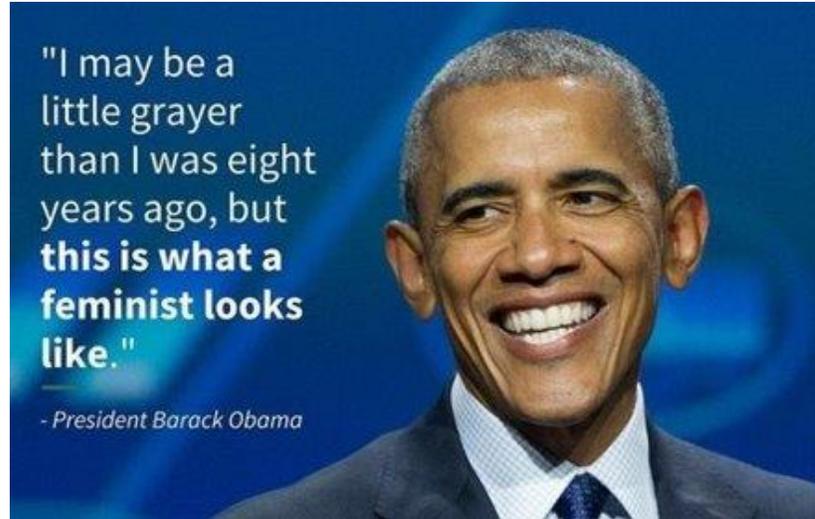
**Key Policy to place gender equality and gender justice Central.**

Why?

- ❖ Evaluations: gender mainstreaming efforts are not sufficiently effective. Not to achieve women's human rights & gender justice AND not to achieve other goals of foreign affairs.
- ❖ Open the conversation on eliminating structural barriers to gender justice such as gendered norms. Adoption of a gender-transformative approach.
- ❖ Policy coherence: gender justice central for decision making in all sectors of foreign affairs



# What is an FFP: The Term Feminism



- Political positioning that recognizes and proposes to change structural inequalities in gender relations, derived from patriarchy. Different forms of feminism.
- Term and form of feminism within FFP not prescribed. Define jointly!
- Open to new forms and interpretations of feminism already present

# What is an FFP: Feminist Principles 1

A comprehensive approach

Human rights or rights-based approach

Gender-transformative change

Solid gender mainstreaming

Intersectionality: realization that discrimination or privilege is based on a person's combined identities

Gender-based analysis or gender-based analysis plus

# What is an FFP: Feminist Principles 2

Collaboration with  
women's rights  
organizations

Committed  
leadership

Ownership (internal,  
civil society, Global  
South)

Consultative and  
participative

Evidence based

Rs: (Women's) Rights,  
Representation,  
Resources, Research,  
Reality Check/ Reach

# What is an FFP: Feminist Principles 3

To lesser extent embraced by country governments:

Anti-racism

Decolonisation

Demilitarisation and disarmament

**YOUR FOREIGN  
POLICY CAN'T BE  
FEMINIST IF YOU  
HAVE NUCLEAR  
WEAPONS**



THE FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY PROJECT

# Best practices and Opportunities

- ❖ Political leadership, high level commitment, placing gender justice central
- ❖ Daily reminder and responsibility by all working in all sectors of foreign affairs (e.g. Sweden)
- ❖ Clarity of the term Feminism, Feminist Principles, focus and themes such as e.g. focus on the Rs: Rights, Resources, Representation, Research and Reach
- ❖ Rights-based approach to all work in all sectors of foreign affairs
- ❖ Intersectional lens (Canada)
- ❖ Shifting North-South dynamics
- ❖ Accountability mechanisms including gender-budgeting
- ❖ Internal capacity building (Sweden) and support structure (Canada)
- ❖ Civil society dialogue and lobby opportunities on women's rights
- ❖ Collaboration national gender ministries

# Results

- ❖ Considerable increase in gender mainstreaming (too early to say for all countries)
  - ❖ Considerable increase in gender specific initiatives including more attention to and support of Women's Rights Organizations
  - ❖ (Working towards) more policy coherence (e.g. arms, GBV, trade)
  - ❖ Walk the talk at national level (and the other way around)
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- ❖ Different mind-set and culture change within the Ministries themselves
  - ❖ E.g. more attention to corporate social responsibility and/or women, peace and security

# Challenges

- ❖ State interests and policy coherence
- ❖ Not all FFPs equally intersectional
- ❖ White feminism and how to truly listen to women's voices from the Global South (North-South dynamics, patriarchy), including women in all their diversity living in most marginalized situations
- ❖ Neo-liberal feminism and how to work towards ending all forms of injustice
- ❖ The term feminism becoming depoliticised and less meaningful
- ❖ Commitment and capacity individual staff members
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- ❖ Institutionalization? What will happen in case of major Cabinet shifts?

# Prerequisites for the Netherlands on the way to an FFP



- ❖ The term feminism: define (political) feminism from the start, give it a 'Dutch face' and communicate the Feminist Principles clearly
- ❖ Political leadership required and buy-in at individual level
- ❖ A truly consultative (i.e. participatory) approach for development and monitoring of the FFP: internal and external and with the Global South
- ❖ More than branding

# Opportunities for the Netherlands on the way to an FFP



- ❖ Reputation and credibility: international recognition for gender transformative work such as through Power of Women and Leading from the South
- ❖ More structural gender mainstreaming and with an intersectional lens in International Development, particularly themes such as Private Sector Development, Food and Water
- ❖ Structural commitment to a gender transformative approach and gender mainstreaming, with an intersectional lens, in the other sectors of Foreign Affairs
- ❖ Intersectional lens to other human rights themes such as LGBTQI+
- ❖ Walk the Talk: more to be done domestically within the Netherlands

# Group Work

As a member of  Vereniging **NEDWORC** Association

1) What do you see as the added-value of an FFP?

2) What would the adoption of a solid FFP\* mean for your work? And for you yourself in your work? What could you do yourself to adequately support implementation of the FFP?

\* This could be an FFP from a donor or recipient country, or an organization/client supporting an 'FFP' for its own work.

3) Optional: which Feminist Principles do you consider most important for the Dutch FFP? Why?