

Gespräche zur Internationalen Zusammenarbeit

giz Repräsentanz Berlin



Feminist Foreign Policy – Rights. Resources. Representation.

For the first time Feminist Foreign Policy is mentioned in the coalition agreement of the German government. It states that Germany would “strengthen the Rights, Representation and Resources of women, girls and marginalized groups such as LGBTI. Equal political, economic, and social participation, the strengthening of sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls, and unrestricted access to equal education and health care are central to us.” On occasion of its yearly Gender week, the discussion brought together representatives of the German government, from partner countries as well as civil society to learn more about what Feminist Foreign Policy will mean for Germany and what expectations partner countries have.

Women as agents of peace

In her opening statement, **Marta Lucía Ramírez**, Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia, emphasized that “we need structural changes, and we need it now”. Women make up

half of the population, so “institutions and processes need to be rethought, reformed and created” to provide women with adequate and equal opportunities.

“Columbia is committed to promoting women’s participation in peace talks”, she stressed and emphasized the need to continue the dialogue between Germany and Colombia. She pointed out that “seven out of ten Foreign ministers have

been women”. However, “there is still a long way to go to achieve material gender equality”, she headlined.

For the Cameroonian gender and peace activist **Marthe Wandou** Feminist Foreign Policy designs “clear objectives and actions in which women are centred” in order to provide “solutions to inequalities and women’s rights violations” inside the country. At international level the feminist approach should be promoted as a “best practice and as a condition for collaboration”.

Referring to Germany’s implementation of a Feminist Foreign Policy and Feminist Development Policy, she said that the German approach “should be elaborated as soon as possible and shared rather practical than theoretically”. Women’s “participation at all levels” is needed, she outlined. Therefore, a Feminist Foreign Policy should foster women’s rights, including more resources, and engage political leaders to implement women empowerment. “This is particularly important at the institutional level, as well as in peace negotiations”, she outlined.

“Germany is a model of gender implementation”, **Wandou** said. It is important to “make the Feminist Foreign Policy available and to share its perspectives with partner countries”. Therefore, dialogue processes with partner countries focusing on human rights, women, youth, and minority groups can help “getting on decision-making tables and leadership positions”. **Wandou** further explained that direct participation in policy “makes sure the implementation goes to the communities and reinforces equal access to education”. To implement an effective Feminist Foreign Policy both an “institutional process and reforms are needed”. Therefore, she explained that on the one hand “public institutions have to be reviewed and restructured in

“We are convinced that women are agents of change and undeniable peacebuilders.”

Marta Lucía Ramírez, Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia



“Make the feminist policy available and share its perspective with partner countries.”

Marthe Wandou
Cameroonian gender and peace activist,
Founder of ALDEPA and 2021 Alternative
Nobel Prize Laureate



order to disable structures that allowed abuses to occur. On the other hand, processes of recruitment should take care of an effective and meaningful representation of women and other socially vulnerable groups.” To work for this overarching goal, it is important to cooperate at all levels with the government but also “strengthen the link with civil society organisations like mine for making sure that organisations which are driven by women can really submit proposals”.

Best practice and cooperation

Feminist Foreign Policy “is not an abstract concept but is something concrete” **Günter Sautter**, Director-General for International Order, the United Nations and Arms Control at the Federal Foreign Office mentioned. And emphasized that in the coalitions treaty Feminist Foreign Policy is “anchored as a concept”. The current German government is “committed to making sure that on the three ‘Rs’: Rights, Representation, and Resources we will see progress in the next four years in terms of the German foreign policy”. Working on gender parity is an “imperative of our constitution”, he stressed. Therefore, the Feminist Foreign Policy approach will make sure that the interests and perspectives of all people will be taken into account.

“We are not starting from scratch”, nevertheless there is the need to make much more progress, explained **Sautter**. Within the federal government, the Federal Ministry of Cooperation is ahead of the Foreign Office, he said. To reach gender parity inside the Foreign Office various measures have been taken, such as the 50/50 rule for new hires and the support of female colleagues. “We can get really used to the notion that parity is a reality in our foreign policy”, he underlined. But this will require time. A new generation of young diplomats needs to grow up in the changed setting. Even if this takes time, he is optimistic that nobody in the leadership positions in the Foreign Office “is not on board and not sincerely convinced”.

A key point also is the “first German female Foreign Minister”, he stressed. With Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock “something quite fundamental has already changed”. With a woman leading the Foreign Office “a change in style and a change in the approach to foreign policy” will be established. With the new approach the Foreign Office makes sure that “we

won’t wait for another 151 years for the next female Foreign Minister”, he concluded.

Right now, “we are in a reflection process”, **Sautter** explained. “In this process we want to make sure that we are not reinventing the wheel but that we are copying all available good ideas”. Therefore, we are in exchange with “like-minded players” in Sweden, Canada, the Netherlands, Mexico, and Spain. However, this should not be understood to mean that nothing has happened so far. He underlined that the implementation of the new approach had started long time ago. “We are on this on so many fronts and we are doing it with a certain passion”, he said.

The role of men and boys in a feminist foreign policy

“We need men and boys to be part of the change”, **Gary Barker** underlined. Only with the involvement of both men and women gender equality can be achieved. But he made clear this would be far more than a participation in a webinar. It is a long-term process that includes male allyship promoting women’s political participation and representation. To the question of whether men should call themselves feminists he highlighted, that “the term ‘ally’ is an important one” because it suggests that we are doing it together. “If women want me to use the word ‘feminist’ I am happy to call myself a feminist”, he explained. “We have not achieved equality”, Barker criticized. The majority of unpaid work is still carried out by women. Moreover, women are at a much higher risk of experiencing domestic violence, he said. To get more men and boys involved in the process, “we have to explain to men what is in for us”, he stressed. Working towards gender equality is also good for men and boys. According to him, it shows that men and boys who believe in equality “live better and love better”. This shows that gender equality also requires a rethinking of manhood “to acknowledge of how connected the genders are”. To work for this goal, information, explaining and campaigns are needed, he underlined.

The implementation strategy will be launched in a programmatic piece of paper later this year. But one thing is sure, **Sautter** concluded: “German Feminist Foreign Policy approach is a “change in style” of the German government, which will “embrace the perspectives and need of very different actors”.

“(Feminist Foreign Policy) is not an abstract concept, it is something that goes to the heart of what we see and what we are trying to shape at the international level, right now.”

Günter Sautter, PhD
Director-General for International Order, the
United Nations and Arms Control, Federal
Foreign Office, Germany



“My bottom line is: How do we help men to see that they have a stake in a feminist future?”

Gary Barker, PhD
CEO and founder of Promundo-US and
Steering committee member for the Coali-
tions for a Feminist Foreign Policy in the
United States

