

'Feminist Foreign Policy Forum

Concepts, good practices and lessons learned to encourage the creation and implementation of a Feminist Foreign Policy in the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean'

- Concept Note -

Dates: 1st and 2nd of October 2024

Organisation: EU-LAC International Foundation, EU-LAC International Women's Network

Partners: Ministry of Equality of Spain, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of Spain, Barcelona Provincial Council, Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation

Venue: Barcelona, Spain

Format: hybrid event

Introduction

The **EU-LAC Foundation** is an international intergovernmental body established in 2010 by the States of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and the European Union (EU), as well as the EU through its institutions. Its headquarters are located in Hamburg, Germany. Its mandate is to work with its 61 members to promote bi-regional partnership and dialogue and to facilitate civil society participation in it, in order to generate relevant inputs for intergovernmental processes. An essential part of this mission is to build bridges and generate spaces for dialogue, collaboration and dialogue with decision-makers in thematic areas that are high on the agenda of the strategic partnership between the two regions, such as sustainable social and economic development, climate change, and gender relations.

The **EU-LAC Women's International Network (EU-LAC WIN)** is a diverse, plural, and intergenerational informal space connecting women from Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union. Its objective is to promote a dialogue capable of mobilizing collective commitment, knowledge and capacities to accelerate transformations in the field of gender equality. The search for synergies and the commitment to complementarity between governments, civil society and academia are the factors from which the Network aspires to deepen the approach to the structural causes of gender inequalities and offer innovative solutions to present and future challenges. Currently, the Network has three priority lines of action: (1) gender and climate action; (2) social development and the care economy, and (3) women's political participation. These actions of the Network are committed to multilateralism and the 2030 Agenda to contribute to an inclusive and sustainable bi-regional agenda.

Context

In an interconnected and ever-evolving world, the promotion and fulfilment of gender equality and women's rights is not only a matter of social justice within nation-states, but also an essential component in international relations and cooperation for the construction of lasting peace.

global security and sustainable development¹. This idea has led to reflections on the orientation of traditional foreign action towards a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) in some European, Latin American and Caribbean countries, which arises from the growing understanding that gender issues are not marginal in the field of international relations and foreign action. Government authorities, international organizations, academic institutions, and think tanks have begun to reflect on the possible design of international public policies in conceptual and practical terms, and what can already be deduced from the ideas articulated is a consensus that the FFP incorporates transformative feminist perspectives in a comprehensive way in all areas of a country's foreign policy. The concept of FFP includes as its objective the overcoming of global structural inequalities (gender, economic, social, cultural, racial) that have reinforced hierarchies in the international system to date, including the legacy of colonialism², and the impacts of the way global markets and production are organised³. Although it is up to each country to design its own foreign policy based on national and global interests, it is understood that the areas of a FFP revolve around current challenges and opportunities that require concerted action by the international community, such as peace and security, trade, climate change, migration, cooperation, and development, among others.

Similarly, it can be based on the shared understanding that a Feminist Foreign Policy goes beyond the inclusion or participation of women in foreign action. Rather, and in order to prevent the initiatives taken corresponding to and depending on the political conjunctures of the current government, the legal institutionalization of gender perspectives in policies is another objective. For many, the implementation of a FFP would also mean that civil society could hold States accountable for the progress of the initiatives implemented⁴.

Although a variety of definitions and conceptions of what is understood as a FFP have been proposed⁵, for the purposes of this initiative one of the possibilities we propose for discussion is to understand **FFP as a government policy that defines its interactions with other States, as well as with movements and other non-State actors, prioritizing equality among all people; that pursues human security and feminist peace and environmental integrity; that it enshrines, promotes and protects the human rights of all, especially women and other politically marginalised groups; opposes colonial, capitalist, racist, patriarchal and military power structures; and allocates resources to achieve those goals. Feminist foreign policy is anchored in the exercise of these values at the domestic level to promote a more just world order and**

¹ UN Women (2022). Feminist Foreign Policies: an introduction. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/09/brief-feminist-foreign-policies>

² Haastrup, Toni (2023). Making Feminist Foreign Policy Work for Africa. Africa Policy Research Institute. <https://afripoli.org/making-feminist-foreign-policy-work-for-africa#item-4>

³ Cheung, Jessica; Guersel, Dilek; Kirchner, Jelenka; Scheyer, Victoria (2021). Practicing Feminist Foreign Policy in the Everyday: A Toolkit. Heinrich Böll Stiftung. <https://www.boell.de/en/2021/11/23/practicing-feminist-foreign-policy-everyday-toolkit>

⁴ UN Women (2022). Feminist Foreign Policies: an introduction. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/09/brief-feminist-foreign-policies>

⁵ Papworth, Eryn (2024). Advancing Feminist Foreign Policy in the Multilateral System: Key Debates and Challenges. International Peace Institute. <https://www.ipinst.org/2024/03/advancing-feminist-foreign-policy-in-the-multilateral-system>



seeks to be co-managed with social and feminist groups and movements, inside and outside a country⁶.

Feminist Foreign Policies have emerged in parallel with a global backlash in terms of equality and human rights and the hostility of some States against these rights in the multilateral system⁷. In this sense, a FFP could be an innovative instrument that has the potential to contribute to building peaceful, lasting, and sustainable relations, economic growth, and development, helping to transform cooperation and relations between Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. At its most aspirational, **a FFP represents an opportunity to strengthen and transform multilateralism and democratic institutions in our regions**. EU and LAC countries can act as catalysts to design coherent and robust frameworks for a feminist foreign policy, reinforcing unity around common values based on human rights.

Regional Background

Both the EU, several of its member countries and some of the LAC countries, have made progress in the construction of a Feminist Foreign Policy and a State Policy to recognize that common global challenges such as the climate emergency, security, migration, digital transformation, and development require everyone's gaze in the search for effective solutions. In the European Union, there are several countries that have designed and implemented a Feminist Foreign Policy, such as **Sweden** (2018)⁸, **France** through its feminist diplomacy strategy (2019) and its announcement to publish a manual to define the principles of its FFP (2021),⁹ and **Spain**¹⁰ (2021). **Luxembourg** (2021)¹¹ and **the Netherlands** (2022)¹² announced their commitment to establish an

⁶ This definition is aligned with and draws upon the concept put forward by the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (2021). The CFFP Glossary. <https://centreforfeministforeignpolicy.org/2021/03/08/feminist-glossary-2/>; and by Thompson, Lyric; Patel, Gayatri; Kripke, Gawain, and O'Donnell, Megan (2020). Towards a Feminist Foreign Policy in the United States. <https://www.icrw.org/publications/toward-a-feminist-foreign-policy-in-the-united-states/>

⁷ Papworth, Eryn (2024). Advancing Feminist Foreign Policy in the Multilateral System: Key Debates and Challenges. International Peace Institute. <https://www.ipinst.org/2024/03/advancing-feminist-foreign-policy-in-the-multilateral-system>

⁸ See Handbook Sweden's feminist foreign policy: https://www.swedenabroad.se/globalassets/ambassader/zimbabwe-harare/documents/handbook_swedens-feminist-foreign-policy.pdf

⁹ Thompson, Lyric; Ahmed, Spogmay and Khokhar, Tanya (2021). Defining Feminist Foreign Policy: a 2021 update. International Center for Research on Women. <https://www.icrw.org/publications/defining-feminist-foreign-policy/>

¹⁰ See Política Feminista de España: <https://www.exteriores.gob.es/es/PoliticaExterior/Paginas/PoliticaExteriorFeminista.aspx>

¹¹ See The Gender Security Project: Luxembourg. <https://www.gendersecurityproject.com/post/luxembourg-s-feminist-foreign-policy#:~:text=Luxembourg's%20Feminist%20Foreign%20Policy%20prioritizes,dimensions%20of%20its%20external%20action.>

¹² See Letter to the Parliament on feminist foreign policy, Government of the Netherlands: <https://www.government.nl/documents/parliamentary-documents/2022/12/07/letter-to-the-parliament-on-feminist-foreign-policy>



Action Plan for the implementation of an FFP. **Germany** was also added to the list of European countries in 2023¹³. **Slovenia** also announced in 2023 its intention to reorient its foreign policy by incorporating feminist principles and placing gender equality and respect for the human rights of women and girls at the heart of foreign action policies¹⁴. Recently, Cyprus has also pledged to integrate gender mainstreaming into foreign policy¹⁵.

From Latin America and the Caribbean, although in a more incipient way, progress has also been made in the design of feminist foreign policies, with **Mexico** (2020)¹⁶ and **Chile** (2023).¹⁷ In **Argentina**¹⁸, a special representative for Feminist Foreign Policy was appointed in January 2023. However, the change of government has halted progress on these issues, and short-term continuity is not anticipated¹⁹. Meanwhile, **Colombia**²⁰ presented in January 2024 its pacifist, intersectional and participatory FFP to the United Nations²¹.

Furthermore, in March 2024, a Declaration on Feminist Foreign Policy for Latin America and the Caribbean was adopted on the sidelines of the VIII Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).²² This initiative, co-sponsored by Mexico, Chile and Colombia, was

¹³ See Germany's Federal Foreign Office "Guidelines for Feminist Foreign Policy: a foreign policy for all": <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/themen/ffp-guidelines/2585074>

¹⁴ See <https://www.gov.si/en/news/2023-03-08-minister-fajon-presents-feminist-foreign-policy-as-a-modern-future-oriented-policy/#:~:text=Slovenia%20has%20always%20been%20committed,equality%20at%20home%20and%20abroad>

¹⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus (2021, 8 March). Article by FM Christodoulides on the occasion of International Women's Day: <https://mfa.gov.cy/interviews/2021/03/08/fm-christodoulides-article-international-womens-day-2021/>

¹⁶ See Feminist Foreign Policy of the Government of Mexico: <https://embamex.sre.gob.mx/grecia/images/politicos/PDF/POLEXTFEM.pdf>

¹⁷ See Chilean Feminist Foreign Policy Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile: <https://politicaexteriorfeminista.minrel.gob.cl/>

¹⁸ See National Executive Decree 881/2022 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship. Retrieved from: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/normativa/nacional/decreto-881-2022-377538>

¹⁹ See "Política Exterior Feminista: avances y retrocesos. Reflexiones en torno al 8M". <https://www.iri.edu.ar/index.php/2024/03/08/politica-exterior-feminista-avances-y-retrocesos-reflexiones-en-torno-al-8m/>

²⁰ See "Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiates the design of feminist foreign policy, hand in hand with women's organizations and LGBTIQ+ people". <https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/newsroom/news/cancilleria-inicia-diseno-politica-exterior-feminista-mano-organizaciones-mujeres>

²¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia (2024, March 15). For the first time in history, Colombia presented its Feminist Foreign Policy to the United Nations: <https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/newsroom/news/primera-vez-historia-colombia-presento-su-politica-exterior-feminista-naciones-unidas>

²² See "Colombia, together with Mexico and Chile, promoted the adoption of the Declaration on Feminist Foreign Policy for Latin America and the Caribbean." <https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/newsroom/news/colombia-junto-mexico-chile-impulso-adopcion-declaracion-politica-exterior-feminista>



supported by Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador and the Dominican Republic, and can be considered a regional advance in the promotion of gender equality principles.

The fact that this is a recent and evolving topic has led to the development of a variety of interpretations, concepts, priorities and objectives of what could be conceived as a FFP. Sweden initiated the institutionalization of this new concept and opened the space to question the status quo of foreign policy on key issues such as national security, development cooperation and trade agreements. The country defined the objectives of its FFP around the “R” framework: (1) rights for girls and women (**rights**), (2) resources for working towards gender equality (**resources**), (3) equal representation of all genders (**representation**), and (4) reality check to study the context in which the FFP is implemented, make alliances with local actors, and promote research (**reality**).²³

The areas in which a FFP is intended to be implemented also vary from country to country. Sweden, Spain, and Mexico, for example, decided to focus their FFPs in the areas of peace and security, trade, development aid, human rights, and diplomacy. Meanwhile, Spain and Germany have incorporated the areas of the climate crisis and energy policy into their strategies, while Chile and Germany pursue objectives around the digital agenda. Colombia seeks to critically analyse and transform the power relations and historical practices that reproduce gaps and inequalities. Despite the diversity, all the aforementioned FFPs share principles such as the inclusion of gender mainstreaming in the different areas of foreign policy, which also implies transformation within the institutions responsible for foreign policy; increased participation of women in foreign policy as peace and security processes; economic empowerment and the promotion of women’s rights, the fight against discrimination, and gender-based violence²⁴.

It is important to emphasise that the objectives of these FFPs are framed in the regional and international obligations and commitments assumed by States to defend, promote and respect the human rights of women in their diversity and gender equality, such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) of 1946, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in force since 1981, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995, the Belém do Pará Convention of 1995, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security of 2000, the Regional Gender Agenda and the 2030 Agenda of 2015. At the regional level, the European Commission adopted in 2018 the new EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, and in 2020 an ambitious Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in External Action 2021-2025 (GAP III),²⁵ which seeks to lay the foundations for a more active role for women in peace and security, address the cross-cutting dimensions of discrimination, promote a change in social attitudes and integrate a

²³ Thompson, Lyric; Ahmed, Spogmay and Khokhar, Tanya (2021). Defining Feminist Foreign Policy: a 2021 update. International Center for Research on Women. <https://www.icrw.org/publications/defining-feminist-foreign-policy/>

²⁴ Arco, Inés (2022). Feminist Foreign Policies: Beyond Discourse. CIDOB. https://www.cidob.org/publicaciones/serie_de_publicacion/notes_internacionales_cidob/269/las_politicas_exteriores_feministas_mas_alla_del_discurso

²⁵ See Action Plan for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021-2025 (GAP III): https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2184



transformative gender perspective into all external relations policies and actions. Similarly, the European Parliament is committed to gender mainstreaming, promoting, and protecting women's rights and promoting equal participation in foreign policy affairs²⁶. At the bi-regional level, the Euro-Latin American Women's Forum stands out for its efforts to promote gender equality through parliamentary diplomacy.²⁷

The commitment to the design and implementation of a FFP has also been reflected in high-level multilateral discussion spaces. In September 2023, the Netherlands hosted the first High-Level Meeting in the framework of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, where 18 countries signed the **Political Declaration on Feminist Approaches to Foreign Policy**²⁸ signaling their commitment to work across regions and countries to advance collective efforts towards gender equality and to cooperate closely with civil society and feminist movements in the policy-making and decision-making processes.

In addition, the **Declaration of the EU-CELAC Summit of 18 July 2023**²⁹, which seeks to renew the bi-regional partnership between the two regions, mentions the commitment at the highest level to combat multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and gender-based violence and the need to reform cooperation and coordination on issues of common interest, including human rights, climate change, energy security, migration and digitalisation, among other issues (paragraph 9).

Furthermore, the **III Ministerial and High-Level Representatives Conference on Feminist Foreign Policies** was recently held in Mexico City from the 1st to the 3rd of July. During this event, a declaration focused on women's rights was presented, reaffirming the commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the development of economic and social systems with a gender perspective³⁰. The declaration, endorsed by 19 countries, of which 15 are members of the EU or CELAC, is open for endorsement by all States and emphasises the crucial role of women in conflict resolution and international peace³¹. The event also highlighted the need to move forward without backtracking on gender equality, seeking a generational and gender pact that empowers women in

²⁶ Burni, Aline and Thissen, Laetia (2024). A European Feminist Foreign Policy? The need for a progressive and transformative approach. Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS). <https://fepeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/PB-European-Feminist-Foreign-Policy.pdf>

²⁷ Jancic, Davor; Druciarek, Malgorzata; Nizynska, Aleksandra; Kubeková, Veronika and Blomeyer, Roland (2021). Promoting Gender Equality through Parliamentary Diplomacy, European Parliament Think Tank: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/es/document/EXPO_STU\(2021\)653654](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/es/document/EXPO_STU(2021)653654)

²⁸ Government of the Netherlands (2023, September 20). Political Declaration on Feminist Approaches to Foreign Policy: <https://www.government.nl/documents/diplomatic-statements/2023/09/20/political-declaration-on-feminist-approaches-to-foreign-policy>

²⁹ See <https://eulacfoundation.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2023-07/st12000.en23.pdf>

³⁰ See <https://www.gob.mx/sre/prensa/mexico-presenta-declaracion-sobre-derechos-de-la-mujer-en-la-iii-conferencia-ministerial-sobre-politicas-exterores-feministas>

³¹ Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores. (2024). Declaration by the Chair of the Third Conference: III Ministerial and High-Level Representatives on Feminist Foreign Policies. Retrieved from https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/925394/Declaration_CoPEF_Ingle_s.docx.pdf



international forums and contributes to achieving a renewed, inclusive and fruitful multilateralism.

Among the concerns articulated in relation to FFPs are the current approach to FFPs, and the risk that FFPs remain in conceptualization and theory without being concretised in action plans for their implementation³². First, the principles of a FFP are still absent in key areas such as peace and security, migration, and trade, leading to contradictory and inconsistent policies such as the export of arms by countries that committed to a FFP to authoritarian countries where there is a high rate of violations of women's rights. or the insufficiency of policies to combat gender-based violence within countries that are committed to a FFP³³. Second, there is evidence of the lack of critical approaches such as an intersectionality, anti-racism and decoloniality approach, which would limit the scope of a FFP to transform the power structures that are sought to be transformed³⁴. Thirdly, although governments and civil society have made progress in the design of evaluation tools to identify the degree of mainstreaming of gender approaches in the different dimensions of foreign policy and the effectiveness of the FFP³⁵, their application continues to be a challenge for the feminist perspective of the FFP to survive in transition processes towards more conservative governments³⁶.

Taking into account this background, the EU-LAC Foundation, through its International Network of EU-LAC Women, as well as the Ministry of Equality of Spain and the Provincial Council of Barcelona, being key actors to generate dialogues on issues of utmost relevance for the cooperation of LAC countries and the EU, propose to develop a multi-stakeholder Forum to identify common challenges and opportunities, to make visible good practices, innovative actions, lessons learned and to move towards concrete solutions to deliberate and help put into practice a Feminist Foreign Policy contextualised and based on principles of intersectionality, anti-racism and regional equity in areas that require a greater role in the foreign policy of EU and LAC countries.

³² Conway, Marissa (2024, March 20). Is Feminist Foreign Policy still a good idea? Feminist Tinted glasses: <https://marissakonway.substack.com/p/is-feminist-foreign-policy-still>

³³ Arco, Inés (2022). Feminist Foreign Policies: Beyond Discourse. CIDOB. https://www.cidob.org/publicaciones/serie_de_publicacion/notes_internacionales_cidob/269/las_politicas_exteriores_feministas_mas_alla_del_discurso

³⁴ Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (2022). Report: Feminist Foreign Policy for the EU. <https://centreforfeministforeignpolicy.org/2022/11/15/report-feminist-foreign-policy-for-the-eu/>;

Sepúlveda, Daniela (2021). Política Exterior Feminista: el próximo emprendimiento normativo de América Latina. Fundación Carolina. <https://www.fundacioncarolina.es/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/AC-34-2021.pdf>; Papworth, Evyn (2024). Advancing Feminist Foreign Policy in the Multilateral System: Key Debates and Challenges. International Peace Institute. <https://www.ipinst.org/2024/03/advancing-feminist-foreign-policy-in-the-multilateral-system>

³⁵ Oxfam International (2023). Guide to the use of the Feminist Foreign Policy Assessment Tool. Oxfam International. <https://www.oxfamintermon.org/es/publicacion/guia-evaluacion-politica-exterior-feminista#>

³⁶ Papworth, Evyn (2024). Advancing Feminist Foreign Policy in the Multilateral System: Key Debates and Challenges. International Peace Institute. <https://www.ipinst.org/2024/03/advancing-feminist-foreign-policy-in-the-multilateral-system>



Format

A 1,5-day event is expected to be held around feminist foreign policy. The Forum will have a plenary session at the beginning, several thematic sessions where work will be done in groups, a plenary session where the results of the different sessions will be discussed, and a closing session. Representatives of the governments of the different countries of both regions, representatives of civil society, international organizations and experts from academia will be invited to share their perspectives, good practices, lessons learned, challenges and recommendations to conceptualize and implement a FFP based on the aforementioned principles.

The thematic sessions will revolve around the incorporation of feminist principles into issues relevant to the foreign policy of EU and LAC countries:

- **Equality:** A FFP could promote the improvement in the effectiveness and quality of the actions of public entities at all levels of government to guarantee the full exercise of human rights, equality, and the fight against all forms of discrimination (gender, sex, age, ethnic or national origin, disability, religion, ...).
- **Gender-based violence:** A FFP should address gender-based violence as a pervasive violation of human rights and take into account its various manifestations, including intimate partner violence, political violence, violence used in armed conflict, or sexual violence in digital spaces.
- **Human mobility:** Intersectionality and the protection of human security are at the heart of the FFP, implying a shift towards a humane and compassionate understanding of migration, and the intention to positively influence the conditions of people in migration status.
- **Rule of Law, Democracy and Inclusive Governance:** A FFP could serve as a catalyst to reinforce the rule of law, strengthen democratic institutions, as well as promote inclusive governance that focuses on equal participation in political decision-making processes as indispensable prerequisites for inclusive, just and peaceful societies.

Expected outcomes

- Identify progress, good practices, challenges, lessons learned, and common opportunities in the conceptualization, design, and implementation of a Feminist Foreign Policy in LAC and the EU.
- Promote exchange between network representatives, civil society organizations, academia and public institutions from LAC and the EU with experience in the design and implementation of a FFP.
- Offer inputs and recommendations for the incorporation of a feminist perspective on strategic issues of foreign policy and bi-regional cooperation between the EU and LAC through a *policy brief*.



Languages

All activities will be carried out in the two working languages of the EU-LAC Foundation – Spanish and English, for which simultaneous interpretation services will be made available. International Sign Language can also be made available if required.

Partner institutions



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