

Chair's Summary: G7 Development Ministers' Meeting

1. From May 31 – June 2, 2018, G7 Ministers responsible for development cooperation met in Whistler, Canada, to discuss their shared priorities on some of the most pressing global development and humanitarian challenges, including advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. This was the first G7 Development Ministers' Meeting since the 2010 Muskoka Summit and the recent endorsements by world leaders of a range of landmark global development and humanitarian action plans, including the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework, and the World Humanitarian Summit's Agenda for Humanity and the Grand Bargain. This year, for the first time in G7 history, Ministers were joined for a portion of their deliberations by six young women leaders from different regions of the world, who shared their personal stories and experiences as adolescents. Ministers also heard from members of the Canadian Government's G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council and insight speakers from civil society and international organizations, who shared their invaluable expertise and recommendations. Together, these voices enriched the discussions and, ultimately, helped to inform decision-making.
2. Under the 2018 G7 Presidency theme of "Investing in Growth that Works for Everyone," Ministers explored solutions to four critical sustainable development themes: advancing adolescent girls' empowerment for sustainable development; combating sexual exploitation and abuse in international assistance; gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian action; and accelerating innovation for development impact. Throughout their discussions, Ministers considered innovative ways to mainstream gender equality and apply gender analysis. The following captures, from the Chair's perspective, highlights of their discussions.

Empowerment of Adolescent Girls

3. Evidence shows that advancing gender equality is one of the most effective ways to eradicate poverty. However, to truly empower women and girls, they need to be consulted, their agency and autonomy respected, and included in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. The young women that Ministers met are youth leaders in their respective communities, in areas such as education, indigenous peoples, sexual and reproductive health and rights, youth advocacy, and combatting child, early and forced marriage. They spoke to their priorities, aspirations and challenges. Their powerful testimonies confirmed that adolescence can be the most transformative time in a girl's life and that empowering the voices of young women will be essential to achieving the ambitious 2030 Agenda.
4. Ministers issued the Whistler Declaration on Unlocking the Power of Adolescent Girls for Sustainable Development, which emphasizes the importance of taking an integrated approach across the life cycle to advance the rights of girls and women and to achieve sustainable development. Ministers agreed to intensify their efforts to address the root causes of gender inequality, particularly the multiple barriers that compound the exclusion of adolescent girls and hinder their ability to achieve their full potential.
5. Ministers agreed that their investments in adolescent girls must be holistic, multi-sectoral, integrated and take an intersectional approach. Ministers recognized the importance of facilitating and promoting approaches led by adolescent girls and to listen to their solutions in order to address the challenges of this generation. Ministers agreed on the need to confront discrimination and ingrained social biases against women and adolescent girls. Many participants called for closer collaboration with developing country partners and other stakeholders to ensure that the needs of adolescents are fully integrated into national policies and that they can access youth friendly services. Others raised the importance of strengthening research, data, indicators, and accountability

systems on investments targeting adolescent girls. Several innovative bilateral and multilateral initiatives being pursued by G7 members were highlighted, including the EU-UN Spotlight and World Bank Human Capital project. Ministers stressed the necessity of engaging men and boys, traditional leaders, media and other influencers as partners to help transform negative social norms and stereotypes, and promote the positive role women and youth-led organizations can play.

6. Ministers, members of the Gender Equality Advisory Council, and young women leaders all stressed the importance of ensuring that adolescent girls are provided with equal opportunities for access to safe, inclusive, equitable, quality education for at least 12 years, including demand-led technical and vocational education and training and e-skills, as a means to obtain meaningful jobs for the future and closing the digital gender-gap. Ministers discussed the need to work with parents and communities to raise awareness about the importance of raising the status of girls and women. Ministers agreed on the value of mobilizing support at all levels—global, national and local—and working across the public and private sectors, including with women and girl-led organizations, to bring to scale more promising and innovative initiatives to advance the empowerment and rights of adolescent girls in sustainable development.
7. Many Ministers identified opportunities to promote innovative, rights-based approaches to address the barriers adolescent girls face to complete a quality education including in conflict affected and fragile places. Among the strategies they called for were: access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and information, including family planning and prevention of sexually transmitted infections; investing in efforts to end sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage, female-genital mutilation/cutting, and in supporting survivors of violence and abuse; and ensuring that girls have access to proper nutrition and appropriate sanitation and hygiene products and services.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

8. Ministers strongly condemned all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, including sexual and gender-based violence, in the development and humanitarian sectors. While Ministers recognized that these actions do not reflect the conduct of the majority of aid workers, they agreed that more determined collective action is needed to strengthen the national and international systems' ability to protect individuals receiving international assistance and to improve their ability to respond to sexual exploitation and abuse. Ministers exchanged information on individual approaches, and strategized on collective actions that could be taken. In this regard, they agreed on a Whistler Declaration on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in International Assistance.

Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action

9. Ministers reflected on a number of pressing humanitarian crises, including the situations in Syria, Yemen, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Myanmar. More broadly, they discussed the extent to which unprecedented needs were straining the global humanitarian response system, including to effectively respond to some 65 million forcibly displaced people. Ministers expressed their deep concern over attacks against civilian populations, humanitarian workers, schools and health facilities. In the absence of lasting political solutions to truly address the scope and scale of the challenges that exist, they called for greater respect for humanitarian law and principles including unobstructed humanitarian access, safety of beneficiaries and aid workers, and stronger human rights-based protection responses. A number of participants called for accelerated follow-up by humanitarian partners to the Grand Bargain.

10. Given that the G7 is responsible for providing some 81% of global humanitarian funding, there was a strong sense that they must work together, and with other States and partners, to drive positive change across the humanitarian system to ensure critical protection and assistance fully and equally reaches those that need it most. There was a shared commitment to work differently to address and reduce humanitarian need, risk and vulnerability. Ministers stressed the need for greater collaboration, including among non-traditional partners and local actors, to address pressing obstacles to humanitarian access, the under-funding of protracted emergencies, and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. There was a desire for more innovative approaches and partnerships so that affected populations could strengthen their resilience and self-reliance.
11. Ministers affirmed women and adolescent girls as powerful agents of change in humanitarian responses and issued the Whistler Declaration on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action. They emphasized the importance of supporting their meaningful participation in decision-making and leadership roles, noting the direct impact this can have on increasing accountability to affected populations. A number of Ministers reflected on the enhanced vulnerability of women and adolescent girls in crises to mental, sexual and physical abuse and violence, and these Ministers stressed the need to ensure they have access to a comprehensive range of supports and services, including in relation to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Participants recognized the value of the Call to Action on gender-based violence. Ministers committed to working with global stakeholders, including humanitarian agencies, to foster a more deliberate approach to advancing gender equality and empowerment in humanitarian programming, and noted the value of disaggregated data and meaningful targets and indicators. They also noted the need to ensure that gender policies are consistently and systematically implemented in the field. In this regard, Ministers agreed in the context of the current Rohingya crisis to promote and pursue greater collaboration, including on women and girls and that such collaboration is very much needed more broadly in humanitarian crises.

Accelerating Innovation for Development Impact

12. Ministers recognized the G7's unique ability to incentivize innovation that can accelerate the impact of international assistance for sustainable development. Ministers further recognized that the past three decades have seen dramatic reductions in global poverty, but to ensure more people benefit equally, unprecedented collaboration across all sectors, institutions and governments at all levels is required. This includes innovations that can reinforce social and economic resilience for people who live in fragile contexts and are exposed to life-threatening diseases or vulnerable to extreme weather events and other hazards. At the same time, Ministers acknowledged that in order to advance the ground-breaking improvements needed to achieve the ambitions of Agenda 2030, business as usual will not suffice. Ministers therefore committed to working together to drive and support pioneering solutions that improve cost effectiveness and challenge traditional models, approaches and partnerships to improve the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable people. Ministers committed to supporting and inspiring their staff, partners and peers to do development differently. This includes promoting inclusive innovation, investing in locally-driven solutions, encouraging smart risk-taking, adopting new program and policy approaches, using data to drive decision-making, identifying scalable solutions, and supporting gender-responsive mechanisms and knowledge sharing. To facilitate these efforts, Ministers endorsed the Whistler Principles to Accelerate Innovation for Development Impact.

Source: <https://g7.gc.ca/en/g7-presidency/themes/investing-growth-works-everyone/g7-ministerial-meeting/g7-development-ministers-meeting-chairs-summary/>