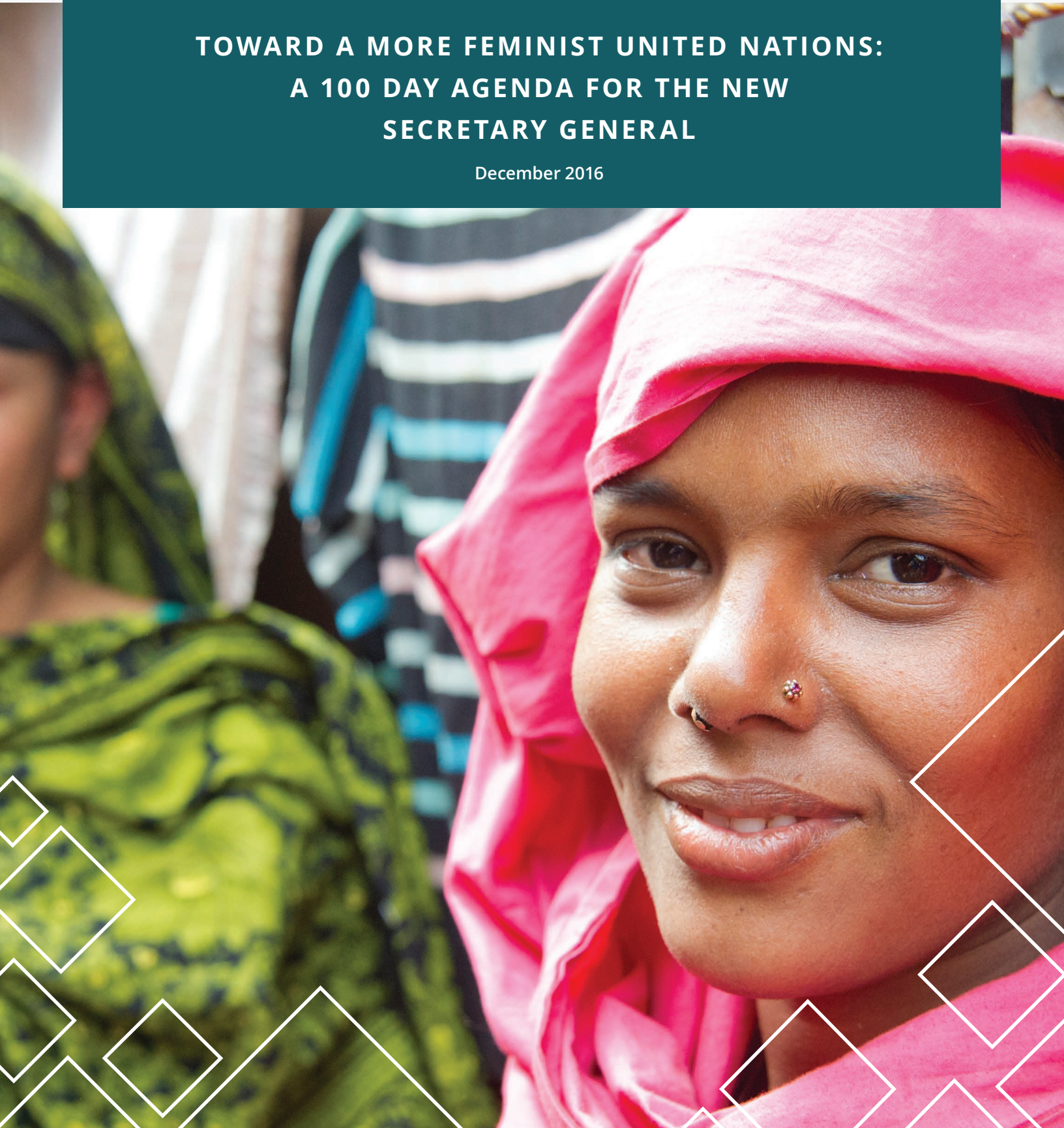




**TOWARD A MORE FEMINIST UNITED NATIONS:  
A 100 DAY AGENDA FOR THE NEW  
SECRETARY GENERAL**

December 2016





The occasion of selecting the 9<sup>th</sup> Secretary-General saw unprecedented public demand for a feminist leader. This prompted many candidates, including Mr. Guterres, to outline beliefs and propose strategies to recognize, protect and promote women's rights and voice as a key part of their platform for leadership of the United Nations.

Over the fall of 2016, the International Center for Research on Women interviewed leading feminist activists, philanthropists, UN insiders and former UN officials as to what a more feminist UN would look like. A number of proposals emerged, which were articulated in an unabridged policy paper. Following the quick selection of Antonio Guterres as the world's next Secretary General, the paper was culled to present an agenda for actions that could be taken by the new Secretary General in his first hundred days in the post to advance this vision and in response to the widespread and unprecedented calls for female and feminist leadership of the United Nations.

It is imperative that the UN system, its actors and policies reflect and embrace gender equality as a fundamental human right. As its highest officer, the Secretary-General must personify this commitment by fully embracing gender equality and the human rights of women and girls, taking immediate and visible actions to ensure more equal representation of and by people of all genders throughout the system itself and advancing those rights in the policies and practices that it upholds. This document describes concrete steps that should be taken by the Secretary General in the first hundred days to promote women's rights and to ensure greater gender equality at the United Nations, both in its internal operations and in fulfilling its mission to promote human rights, peace and sustainable development globally.

Without intentional reform, the entire UN system risks failing in its mission and reinforcing entrenched inequalities that will destabilize social and economic development, perpetuate ecological imbalance and undermine the fulfillment of universal human rights. The UN also risks its own irrelevance and complicity in further exacerbating power asymmetries.

The incoming Secretary-General should signal willingness to take on these issues head-on by setting out a feminist agenda for the first hundred days that acknowledges the challenges inherent in the system and articulates a pathway forward. The following agenda should be embraced by Mr. Guterres as a display of good faith in recognition of those calls for feminist leadership, and to ensure the UN is fit for purpose at this critical time.

At his swearing-in ceremony and ensuing press conference, Secretary-General Guterres committed to achieving gender parity by the end of his term, and making this a key priority for his first hundred days. This is a welcome signal following unprecedented calls for female leadership at the UN during the course of the SG selection process. But a feminist agenda includes and transcends female leadership—coming to power at a time of worrying global trends in nationalism, xenophobia and crackdowns on women's rights, Secretary-General Guterres must also actively champion women's rights with world leaders and within the UN system and model accountability, equality and transparency through his agenda.





## 1. ARTICULATE AND BEGIN TO IMPLEMENT A FEMINIST LEADERSHIP AGENDA FOR THE UN.

Set out an ambitious 100-day agenda, leading to a full-fledged women's rights agenda for the duration of your term, based on UN policies of human rights, equality, fairness and non-discrimination, and outlining which members of the Secretary General's administration are responsible for implementing key provisions. Commit to report on progress to the public on an annual basis, and work with feminist civil society and UN staff to hone and implement (see point 4).



## 2. ENSURE FEMINIST IMPLEMENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE SDGs

The SDGs represent the single largest opportunity to both focus concerted effort on achieving gender equality and to mainstream a focus on gender across global, sustainable development efforts. However, the Goals currently lack a meaningful accountability framework and are in danger of losing or watering down their focus on gender. Express your full support for full implementation of Goal 5 *and* the mainstreaming of gender throughout the framework's implementation, and tap a high-level designee for SDG implementation who:

- ♦ Links the SDGs and their targets to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and ensures that the CSW has a clear mandate to oversee implementation of the Agenda.
- ♦ Links SDG implementation to CEDAW reporting, enables a feminist accountability framework where member states must report on their progress and can be challenged by civil society.
- ♦ Ensures that gender equality and women's human rights is a cross-cutting theme in all related forums and discussions for follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, including the High Level Political Forum, which should include shadow reporting.
- ♦ Advocates for the collection and use of complete, accurate sex-disaggregated data (i.e., "gender data") to measure efforts toward and achievement of the targets outlined in SDG5 and across the SDGs.



## 3. FINANCE FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Insufficient funds are committed to gender equality in programming by all UN agencies, as well as within internal system operations and processes. What funds do exist for gender equality are too often compromised by their origins or structure. Further, a series of traditions and unwritten rules dictate "ownership" of specific UN entities or roles by certain Member States based on donation levels. These practices benefit wealthier Member States, and lead to disproportionate representation throughout the system. The over-earmarking of funds also promotes undue influence among wealthier member states and has fostered the growing influence of private (both corporate and private foundation) funds in the UN system.

- ♦ The Secretary General should commit to promoting greater transparency in spending by publishing how much the UN spends on gender equality and gender mainstreaming, economic policy, and adopt gender budgeting at the Secretariat and agency level. This should be housed at the Secretariat, but could be achieved by the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (the gender SWAP)<sup>1</sup> and should apply to all UN agencies and bodies, including the 5<sup>th</sup> Committee, and make that data publicly available on a central platform.
- ♦ In collaboration with UN Women, the Secretary General should convene an annual High Level Panel on Financing Gender Equality to analyze and present the state of financing for women's rights and gender equality within the UN system.
- ♦ Begin an active campaign to increase funding for UN Women to US\$ 1 billion, the originally-targeted budget for the agency, both by encouraging member state contributions and by pulling from the core general fund, to ensure that it is able to fulfill its mandate.
- ♦ At the same time, commit to a pathway to full financial transparency in the UN by publishing funding sources for all agencies, positions and programs, and encouraging more member states to contribute to the general fund rather than earmarking their contributions to address this ownership issue. In addition to Member State contributions, publish contributions by private (corporate and foundation) funders. As an interim step, make publicly available via agency websites which countries provided funding but required hiring of their country nationals in return and make secondments within agencies public. Challenge member states who propose staff for the Secretary General's key positions to ensure they put forward equal numbers of qualified women.



#### 4. UTILIZE FEMINIST LEADERSHIP AS A DEFINING MODEL OF YOUR ADMINISTRATION AND THROUGHOUT THE UN SYSTEM

There are two primary areas for action here: increasing the numbers of women and feminists in UN leadership, and protecting women's rights across the system. On leadership, despite evidence of the value of, as well as ambitious goals for, equitable representation of women at all levels of the UN, the numbers remain disheartening, and progress remains slow. It took a decade for an increase in the overall representation of women by a mere 5 percentage points.

Patriarchal and unwritten rules perpetuate a culture within the UN system of colonialism, racism, sexism, and ageism. Gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse have been poorly addressed throughout the system, including when perpetrated by and against UN staff, as well as in its programmatic and operational activities. In the absence of a robust, efficient, credible and fair justice process, UN staff members – particularly women who are junior and administrative staff and gender non-conforming staff members – are left in the same kinds of vulnerable situations that the UN is supposed to help countries change. The UN has a wide set of existing policies to ensure that equal access and representation within the UN system, but many are not followed. The new Secretary General must articulate internal processes to uncover, document, and transform this culture, setting-out time-bound goals that will be implemented in every UN agency and body, and reported on publicly:

<sup>1</sup>In early 2012, the United Nations agreed on the landmark UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, or UN-SWAP, to implement the gender equality policy of its highest executive body, the UN Chief Executives Board, chaired by the Secretary-General. Spearheaded by UN Women, the UN-SWAP for the first time assigns common performance standards for the gender-related work of all UN entities, ensuring greater coherence and accountability. See more at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability#sthash.Rd75S5O6.dpuf>

- ♦ On day 1, use the opportunity of the resignation of all A Secretary Generals/USecretary Generals to change the status quo and achieve parity.
- ♦ Establish gender parity in the Cabinet: the Senior Management Team, members of the Policy Committee, and in the members of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) should all be gender equal (in particular the Deputy Secretary-General, the Chief of Staff, the Spokesperson, the chief Speechwriter, the Political Advisor and the members of the Senior Appointments Unit).
- ♦ Call for nominations for strong female, feminist candidates ahead of upcoming agency leadership transitions for the World Health Organization and UN Population Fund, as well as UN treaty bodies.
- ♦ Within 100 days, announce a set of gender-equitable employment practices and respect for care work system-wide, including flexible working hours, realistic expectations of work hours and work-life balance, paid family leave for people of all genders, and zero tolerance for sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence at work, among others.
  - ♦ Articulate and implement employment pathways that do not rely on working at non-family duty stations, which disproportionately preference men. One idea would be instituting 6-month tours of duty in non-accompanied posts with support for child care in the home country.
- ♦ On day 1, institute/update and enforce a zero tolerance policy for all acts of violence, not only sexual exploitation and abuse,<sup>2</sup> committed by any UN staff, peacekeepers, etc.
- ♦ Ensure senior leadership is fully on board with the zero tolerance policy so that they both enforce it and model good behavior. Senior leaders who fail to take action on or who cover up GBV in their organizations or teams should be sanctioned.
- ♦ Introduce performance monitoring for officers that is linked to the zero tolerance policy and show swift action in the face of any allegations.
- ♦ Immediately enforce policies that protect individual whistleblowers and/or agencies that create internal processes who denounce unequal hiring and promotion practices, sexual harassment, and gender discrimination broadly, as well as member state capture of staff positions.
- ♦ Within 60 days, appoint a high-level designee tasked an internal audit, compiling existing UN policies on human rights, equality, fairness, and non-discrimination, and create a framework for implementing them moving forward.
- ♦ Immediately institute a global commission of inquiry, rooted in the view of, and answerable to the people who have been abused.
- ♦ Within 30 days: begin an audit of UN justice systems and processes from a gender perspective. Use this to reform the system, strengthen protection and ensure confidentiality for staff members who experience sexual harassment or any form of gender-based discrimination.
- ♦ Within 90 days: Hold a town-hall meeting with UN staff to publicize existing policies, articulate enforcement and accountability measures, and disclose the results of the internal audit.



<sup>2</sup> <https://cdu.unlb.org/Statistics/AllegationsbyCategoryofPersonnelSexualExploitationandAbuse/AllegationsforAllCategoriesofPersonnelPerYearSexualExploitationandAbuse.aspx>



## 5. ENABLE A FEMINIST TRANSFORMATION FOR CSW AND UN WOMEN

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is at once the symbol of all that is possible for feminism at the UN and emblematic of all that is wrong with the system as it currently stands. It, and UN Women, should be a platform for civil society activists to access the UN, petition for their states to act, and to work in coalition to meet common goals. Both have been a shrinking space for civil society and marked by an increasing influence by the private sector—corporations and private foundations—including through direct committee dialogue with the agency's leadership.

- ♦ Reform annual meetings of CSW to increase intentional spaces for civil society dialogue. For starters, declare that negotiations will not take place in advance of the actual meeting, effectively shutting out civil society voices,
- ♦ Announce at CSW61 that the 2018 CSW will take place outside of New York City, and in a developing country, alternating between New York and UN regions thereafter. This will allow for those who may not be able to obtain visas or funding to get to CSW access this important platform, and discourage the domination of elite voices.
- ♦ Empower gender ministers to negotiate the outcome documents, and encourage a narrower focus on specific women's rights and gender equality issues that foster specific commitments by dutybearers.
- ♦ Convene a plural advisory council that allows for rotating representatives of civil society, unions, and

the private sector to engage directly with UN Women and each other in support of UN Women's mandate. The International Labour Organization implemented a tripartite model of shared leadership by UN, corporations and workers in order to afford equal opportunity for private, public and worker voices which could be used as a model.



## 6. PROMOTE THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION IN THE UN SYSTEM

Understanding that transparency and integrity are feminist principles, within the first 100 days, announce system-wide reforms to increase transparency within the UN and to reinforce public trust in the UN system. Announce that, in the next year, the UN will:

- ♦ Institute universal Gender SWAPs (UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) for all UN agencies and bodies, including the 5th Committee, and make that data publicly available on a central platform. System-wide, televise meetings and open them to civil society participation, especially feminist groups, for in-person as well as via skype or other technological mechanisms.
- ♦ Request that meetings between governments and UN country teams be made publicly available, including the workshops and conferences where country programmes are negotiated.
- ♦ Institute a system-wide Freedom of Information Policy that would allow civil society to request sex-disaggregated information on UN budgets and hiring, SWAP reports, and archived recordings of open meetings.

<sup>3</sup> In early 2012, the United Nations agreed on the landmark UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, or UN-SWAP, to implement the gender equality policy of its highest executive body, the UN Chief Executives Board, chaired by the Secretary-General. Spearheaded by UN Women, the UN-SWAP for the first time assigns common performance standards for the gender-related work of all UN entities, ensuring greater coherence and accountability. See more at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability#sthash.Rd7555O6.dpuf>





These recommendations were inspired by many and assembled by Lyric Thompson,  
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