

G7 - Letter of encouragement

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister and Privy Council
80 Wellington Street
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Dear Prime Minister:

As Canada assumes the G7 Presidency in 2018, we – leaders from civil society, environmental, women and human rights organizations, feminist and eco-justice movements, and academia – call for your focused stewardship and leadership. We urge you to attend to three issues that we believe to be the greatest challenges facing the world:

1. Supporting refugees, migrants and displaced peoples;
2. Tackling climate change and its impacts on poor and marginalized communities; and,
3. Ensuring the sexual and reproductive health and rights of all people.

These issues have often evaded consensus among G7 leaders, and recent trends suggest this will continue to be a challenge for Canada's G7 Presidency. Your continued strong stance on these issues will be critical – not only to defend progress achieved in recent years and decades, but also to create opportunity to address remaining gaps in the future.

Supporting refugees, migrants and displaced people

Worldwide, more than 65 million people, or one in every 122 people, are now either refugees, internally displaced, or seeking asylum – the highest number since World War II. Low- and middle-income countries host some 87 per cent of refugees. The average length of displacement now exceeds 20 years. The risks faced by displaced individuals are often compounded by factors such as age, disability, race and gender.

Over half of the approximately 244 million migrants worldwide are labor migrants, and most move through regular channels. However, there are also many irregular migrants, forced to move through channels that expose them to grave human rights abuses. Once at their destination, many migrants, especially those working in lower-skilled jobs, have little or no labor and human rights protection, or effective access to justice. The high costs of migration often place migrants in situations of debt bondage, making it even harder for them to resist exploitation. Women migrants, especially those performing domestic work, are at additional risk due to discriminatory state practices relating to their freedom of movement, conditions of work, and other factors.

Canada has been recognized for its efforts to meet and promote state obligations to the rights of refugees and other displaced people. Notably, this included Canada's diplomatic and financial contributions to the Leaders' Summit on Refugees in September 2016, which mobilized \$4.5 billion in

additional humanitarian assistance over 2015 levels. This Summit also supported the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which reaffirmed the human rights of all people on the move, and called for a Global Compact on Refugees, and a Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Yet many of the world's wealthiest countries continue to fail to provide safe and legal routes for claiming asylum, or for accessing labor markets across a range of sectors and skill levels – erecting walls and barbed wire instead. Many policy and programming responses are in violation of human rights obligations. These violations include failing to ensure prevention of and response to gender-based violence, and to meet minimum standards for access to sexual and reproductive healthcare for displaced women and girls, and safeguarding access to basic rights and social services for migrants regardless of status – as committed to in the New York Declaration.

With Canada's G7 presidency coinciding with the negotiation of the Global Compacts on Refugees and for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Canada should use this opportunity to reaffirm the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, as well as international human rights and humanitarian law protecting the rights of migrants and refugees alike, and galvanize support for the successful adoption of strong Compacts ensuring predictable global responsibility sharing for refugees and migrants. Canada must lead the G7 towards a human rights-based (and non-securitized) approach to addressing forced displacement and migration. Canada's leadership can help ensure the emerging architecture for refugees and migrants empowers people on the move to access their full rights, particularly by enabling effective and gender-responsive participation of civil society, including refugees and migrants themselves, in the implementation of both Compacts.

Tackling climate change and its impacts on poor and marginalized communities

Without strong preventive action and investments, climate change could push an additional 100 million people into extreme poverty by 2030, and drive the number of permanently displaced people as high as 250 million by 2050. Poor women and girls are least responsible for greenhouse gas emissions, but bear the brunt of the costs of climate change.

The Government of Canada has demonstrated that it understands the scale and severity of the challenges posed by climate change. In 2015, one of your first foreign policy announcements committed \$2.65 billion over five years to help the world's poorest and most vulnerable people deal with the effects of climate change. Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, released in June 2017, underscores that "women and girls are uniquely affected by the damaging effects of climate change," and that climate inaction could cause a loss of up to \$72 trillion in global GDP by 2060. Canada has made significant political investments in international climate diplomacy and domestic decarbonization.

Only two years since the adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, however, this pivotal issue is not being met with requisite urgency and ambition. The 2018 G7 Presidency is an opportunity for Canada to convert its positive rhetoric and multilateral convening power into concrete results in the lead-up to COP24 in December 2018. Success in 2018 means affirming the momentum of the Paris Agreement and its commitment to strive to limit average global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels in all relevant documents at the G7, including communications from the Leaders' Summit. It also means leveraging the G7's macroeconomic role to uphold climate finance commitments. G7 countries must take strong action in 2018 to generate momentum towards the goal of furnishing the Green Climate Fund with \$100 billion US by 2020. A strong climate outcome at the 2018 Summit will

reinforce the Pan-Canadian Framework on Climate Change and Clean Growth and anchor Canada as a global climate leader.

With less than a year before progress under the UNFCCC is assessed at the Talanoa Dialogue in November 2018, Canada should use its G7 Presidency to foster greater trust and cooperation with developing countries, and to raise collective ambition for climate action. Building on the G7 Elmau Leaders' Communiqué, the 2018 G7 should recommit to meeting the \$100 billion goal, and aim to increase protection of poor and vulnerable people, especially women and girls, against climate risks through proactive adaptation, pro-poor insurance, and investments in social protection systems in developing countries.

Ensuring, upholding and increasing sexual and reproductive health and rights

Hundreds of millions of women who want to avoid or delay pregnancy are not using effective contraceptives. Pregnancy and childbirth is the leading cause of death among women aged 15-19, resulting in over half a million deaths per year in addition to those caused by unsafe abortion. These deaths are preventable. Lacking access to comprehensive sexuality education, young people often have little knowledge of strategies to prevent STIs, HIV and unwanted pregnancies, and limited access to sexual and reproductive health services. Despite human rights obligations and MDG and SDG targets, too many states have for too long politicized women's bodies, sexualities and reproductive choices.

In March 2017, the Government of Canada stood up for human rights by announcing its support for a comprehensive approach to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including a financial commitment of \$650 million over three years. At the Family Planning 2020 Summit in July 2017, Canada helped bring attention to the SRHR needs of adolescents and women in humanitarian and fragile contexts. Canada's second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, launched in November 2017, underscores Canada's commitment to uphold women and girls' sexual rights and access to sexual and reproductive health services in humanitarian settings, and responding to and ending impunity for sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation in conflict and by peacekeepers.

Canada's support comes as sexual and reproductive health and rights are under attack around the world – deepening existing resource shortfalls that lead to the denial of lawful safe abortion services and a chill effect on related care. The G7 Presidency is a key moment for Canada to take further action to restore the political will necessary to guarantee human rights, and to position gender equality as a prerequisite to the attainment of all SDGs.

Building on the 2017 G7 Taormina Health Ministers' Communique, United Towards Global Health, and the 2016 G7 Ise-Shima Declaration and Vision for Global Health, Canada's G7 Presidency must generate greater respect and protections for sexual and reproductive rights. This must include measures that support the adoption of a human rights-based approach to the realization of universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, to addressing gender-based violence in all forms, and to recognizing the particular sexual and reproductive health needs of adolescents and women and girls in fragile settings.

The Sustainable Development Goals are within our grasp, but success depends on world leaders championing them. Through Canada's 2018 G7 Presidency, your leadership can play a pivotal role in

bringing political will to support millions of people affected by forced displacement, climate change, and inadequate sexual and reproductive health and rights. As leaders in civil society, we look forward to supporting you to ensure progress on these issues in 2018 and beyond.

Sincerely,

Sandeep Prasad, Executive Director, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights

Julia Sanchez, President-CEO, Canadian Council for International Co-operation

Gillian Barth, President and CEO, CARE Canada

Catherine Abreu, Executive Director, Climate Action Network – Canada

Cc:

Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of International Development and La Francophonie

Hon. Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change

Peter Boehm, Deputy Minister for the G7 Summit and Personal Representative of the Prime Minister