



Australian Government

Statement by the Australian Ambassador for Gender Equality

G20 Ministerial Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Brasilia, Brazil – 11 October 2024

Good morning, *bom dia*

I would like to extend my gratitude to our hosts, Brazil, and specifically to **Minister Cida Gonçalves** and **Executive Secretary Maria Helena Guarezi** for your warm hospitality and dedication to hosting this most important event.

As Australia's Ambassador for Gender Equality it my great privilege to represent our Minister for Women as we come together to advance the essential goals of gender equality and women's empowerment. On behalf of the Minister, I would like to reiterate our strong support for Brazil's Presidency.

I must first acknowledge the dire global situation we find ourselves in today, and the fact that not one country is on track to meet SDG5 is made all the more harder by the situations of women and girls in conflict across the world.

Australia is gravely concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza and the number of civilian deaths.

Australia's assistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is being directed to conflict-affected people with a focus on women and children, including to support food, water, medicines and shelter.

We remained focused on the women and girls in Ukraine who suffer from Russia's illegal invasion.

And we cannot forget the women and girls of Afghanistan.

We know that gender equality is the number one predictor of peace – more so than a country's wealth, level of democracy, or religious identity. And we know that when women are engaged in peace processes, outcomes are improved – before, during, and after conflicts – for everyone.

Australia remains committed the full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

An agenda that is intrinsically and undeniably linked to the work of the G20.

We join together today at this inaugural and historical gathering, as a collective global voice for the 2.5 billion women and girls across the G20.

This is a great responsibility.

The women and girls who are the heartbeat of our communities – the innovators, the leaders, the educators, the peacekeepers, and the carers – who, despite their invaluable contributions, continue to face systemic barriers that impede their full and free participation in our economies and societies.

Their experiences matter.

Their voices matter.

Their lives matter.

Gender equality is not just an Australian priority. It is a global imperative.

To that end, I must express that we are greatly disappointed by Argentina's unwillingness to join us in consensus today.

The world watches as we navigate unprecedented challenges – from global pandemics to climate crises, economic upheaval to social injustice.

Amidst such global uncertainty, one truth remains unequivocal.

Gender equality is not a side issue. It is central to the progress and prosperity of our nations.

As the G20, we hold immense power and responsibility.

We are uniquely positioned to set standards that can transform lives and societies globally.

We cannot, and must not, leave half the world's population behind. Not in words and certainly not in actions.

Gender equality is essential for ending poverty, achieving peace, solving climate crises and build a sustainable and equitable future for all. It is a strategic necessity for security, stability and sustainable development.

Australia is firmly committed to gender equality and the human rights of all women and girls, and persons of diverse gender identities. This

commitment is grounded in the understanding that gender equality is a goal in itself – valuable and inherently just.

Beyond the moral imperative, the economic gains of fully utilising the talent and capacities of one hundred percent of our population benefits us all.

Gender inequality costs the global economy trillions of dollars each year. We cannot afford this loss – economically or ethically.

Yet, we find ourselves at a crossroads.

Attempts to dilute gender equality language in international agreements threatens to undermine decades of progress and challenge the absolute fundamental values we share.

Let us be clear, gender equality language is not only long-standing and agreed upon. It is the bare minimum in recognising structural and socio-cultural inequalities and systemic injustices.

Weakening our language is weakening our resolve.

Words carry power. Words shape policies, influence perceptions and signal our collective and unifying priorities.

They become the scripts that write the future of every girl.

Either unlocking her potential, or chaining her to outdated rigid gender norms and stereotypes. The language we choose can be the key that opens doors or the barrier that keeps them locked.

Diluting gender equality language sends a message that women's rights are negotiable, secondary, or subject to reversal. This is unacceptable to Australia.

We must hold firm on stronger gender equality language. We must resist the dismantling of gender equality architectures – the institutions, laws and frameworks that safeguard women and girls rights and promote their advancement.

Complacency is complicity. The standard we walk past is the standard we accept.

Every moment we delay is a moment too long for those that suffer the consequence of inaction.

Together, we must confront uncomfortable truths, challenge entrenched norms and be willing to redefine the status quo. Drawing on courage, vision and an unwavering commitment to justice.

A G20 that is not strong on the issue of empowering women is a G20 that is not strong on its commitment to deliver strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth.

Multilateralism is a collective strength. And it requires that we ground ourselves in the credibility and leadership of the G20 and come to the table with a consensus mindset.

Australia understands that each of us face particular issues and have specific and distinct priorities and the strength of the G20 is in the discussion and agreement on such issues.

Our legacy will not be defined by the challenges we faced but by how we chose to address them. Let us be remembered as the ones who did not shy away from bold action, who recognised the value of every individual, and who forged a path to a more equal and just world.

Thank you.

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