

MEXICO'S FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

Mexico recently launched a feminist foreign policy under the current administration that has initiated profound transformation. This article elaborates on the motivations behind adopting a feminist foreign policy and its implications within and outside of Mexico's borders. The outcomes of integrating a gender perspective into areas such as climate change and public space design are touched upon as well. While describing Mexico's pioneering role in implementing a feminist foreign policy in Latin America, the article argues for forging a strategic partnership between a feminist and multilateral approach to policy-making while addressing the crucial challenges of our time.

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In his address during the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2019, Mexico’s Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Marcelo Ebrard, pledged that our country would adopt a feminist foreign policy. In January 2020, during the annual meeting of ambassadors and consuls, his pledge became a reality with the announcement of an international policy that emphasized gender equality.

With this decision, Mexico became the first country in Latin America to adopt a feminist foreign policy. It joins a small group of countries from around the world—France, Canada, Norway, and Sweden—that share an interest in making feminism the guideline for their foreign affairs. We specifically want our foreign policy to be informed by the core tenets of feminism, such as substantive equality, personal autonomy in decision-making, the eradication of structural inequalities, and the elimination of discrimination by paying special attention to individual and social human rights. Mexico has adopted these principles in a cross-cutting, multi-sectoral manner, with the aim of building a fairer society in our country and contributing to gender equality around the globe.

Internal and External Implications

Mexico’s feminist foreign policy has both domestic implications—that is, for the societal and governmental structure—and international implications, which affect our bilateral and multilateral commitments with other countries around the world.

With the launch of a feminist foreign policy, in terms of domestic policy, we strive to achieve gender parity in staffing within the Foreign Ministry. Moreover, we are working with the Senate on amending legislation to achieve parity in the Foreign Service. Specifically, we have five goals:

- A foreign policy with a gender perspective and a feminist agenda that takes Mexico’s international leadership on gender issues to the next level
- Parity within the Foreign Ministry, and organizational reforms to achieve gender equality in the workplace
- A Foreign Ministry that is free of violence and that emphasizes collective action to create a working environment free of gender-based violence
- Making feminist leadership visible and raising awareness of women’s contributions to Mexico’s foreign policy
- An intersectional feminist approach to all foreign policy actions

In terms of the international aspects of this feminist foreign policy, Mexico has already started to demonstrate its commitment to gender equality in foreign affairs.

Mexico and France are co-hosting the Generation Equality Forum, a global gathering to take stock of current efforts and make proposals on improving gender equality and gender rights. This is especially notable as this gathering will take place 25 years after the historic Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a landmark for the feminist movement.

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In 2019, the Mexican government, the European Union, and the United Nations joined together to present the Spotlight Initiative in Mexico. This partnership seeks to invest in improving public space design to guarantee the right to benefit from the city and to make public spaces more welcoming for all, but especially for women and girls. As is widely known, the number of femicides continues to shake our social conscience. Femicide is the most extreme form of violence against women. The Spotlight Initiative was designed with the specific aim of changing urban environments in order to end gender violence in public spaces. In its first stage, the Initiative will be implemented in the most violent cities in Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico, with 500 million euros in funding from the EU.

Furthermore, Mexico has deposited two anti-discrimination instruments in relation to the Inter-American Conventions Against Racism and Against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance, which are treaties that have been adopted within the framework of the Organization of American States (OAS). These are legally binding instruments that have entered into force for all member states of the Organization after Mexico's action.

Additionally, and very importantly, in line with the Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) and Gender Action Plan (GAP), Mexico was one of the leading proponents of including gender equality in all policies to combat climate change at the 25th Conference of the Parties (COP25) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Due to the unequal ramifications of climate change, women and girls are more vulnerable to the devastating effects of this global crisis. For instance, they are more likely to die in a natural catastrophe or be displaced for ecological reasons. Therefore, a foreign policy truly committed to gender equality around the globe must include this perspective in all deliberations and negotiations concerning climate change policies.

The Core Elements of Mexico's Feminist Foreign Policy

The core elements of Mexico's feminist foreign policy are consistent with the current transformation to benefit our most vulnerable groups. A key reason for adopting a feminist perspective is to make social phenomena, such as structural inequalities, that would otherwise remain unseen, visible. These inequalities are rooted in historical and contextual vulnerabilities that obstruct women and girls from enjoying basic rights due to their gender.

“Structural gender inequality requires a radical solution.”

Gender violence is another major challenge we need to tackle. It must be eradicated in all of its forms, from the apparently inoffensive, including language, restricted employment opportunities, and professional discrimination, to the most obvious, such as sexual harassment and domestic violence. The key approach to addressing this challenge involves working toward social and individual rights, in addition to multilateralism and cooperation.

The world has made great strides in human rights, however, these efforts remain in a state of fragile equilibrium and therefore require constant vigilance. Mexico's feminist foreign policy accepts that it is the State's responsibility to provide the necessary legal, institutional, financial, and human resources to strengthen fundamental rights and freedoms. We call this a feminist foreign policy because we believe that the feminist struggle for gender equality has been at the forefront of seeking the emancipation of society's most vulnerable groups.

Structural gender inequality requires a radical solution. The problem must be attacked at its very root. I believe that this problem has very deep roots, and that we need more than just a couple of legislative reforms. What is really required is the participation of society as a whole. The transformation that our government is working toward begins with acknowledging the rights of our vulnerable groups, empowering women by putting them in leadership positions in both the government and the private sector, and providing the resources to make it possible to achieve this goal.

The Regional Role of Mexico's Feminist Foreign Policy

It is still very early to be able to gauge the regional reaction to the announcement of Mexico's feminist foreign policy. However, we can say that as the first Latin American country to adopt a feminist foreign policy, Mexico is willing to learn from

other countries with more experience, share its benefits, and lead the nations of our region to adopt this foreign policy. It is in Mexico's diplomatic tradition to share its experiences with the region and beyond. On that note, Mexico constantly seeks to advance feminist foreign policies in multilateral forums; we do this not only to improve this approach to foreign policy, but also to encourage other countries to join this international coalition. This past January, at the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean held in Chile, I had the opportunity to present our feminist foreign policy; the response was very positive. At least one other Latin American country is now working on its own feminist foreign policy.

Concluding Remarks: Mexico's Perspective on Feminism and Multilateralism

The launch of our feminist foreign policy sends a message about how Mexico wants to address humanity's greatest challenges. Mexico is engaged in a profound transformation designed to improve the well-being of its citizens, with a special emphasis on those in need and the most vulnerable. We strongly believe in the principles of feminism; we trust in its proven ability to bring about important social change directed at the emancipation and the construction of fairer societies. For this reason, these principles are guiding our decisions in public policy and, specifically, in foreign affairs.

Together with the nations of the world, Mexico is responsible for resolving our greatest global challenges. Mexico's feminist foreign policy gives us a leading role in the international arena, in a manner that is consistent with our national transformation and with the most noble, global aspirations.