



Women Political Leaders (WPL)

Commitment to Generation Equality

2021



Action Coalition Feminist Movements & Leadership

AC 6 / Action 3

COMMITMENT 1: TRANSFORMATIVE POLITICAL LEADERS AND NETWORKS

Women Political Leaders (WPL) is making an ambitious Commitment to Generation Equality to advance the participation, leadership, and decision-making power of women within political structures in order to accelerate legislative and societal transformation. This Commitment is devised to drive transformative change and underpin the work of the Action Coalition on Feminist Movements and Leadership, which WPL is proud to co-lead.

Specifically, over the next five years:

WPL commits to mobilising and resourcing women political leaders and decision-makers in as many as 50 countries, to drive tangible legislative and societal transformation toward Generation Equality objectives. This will be undertaken through dedicated political and parliamentary engagement, network-building, national convenings of women political leaders, and other high-level public policy fora. In parallel, WPL will work on increasing the number and influence of women in political office by catalysing the participation, leadership, and decision-making power of women, and by encouraging and supporting girls and young women to seek and succeed in leadership roles, through both mentorship programmes and inter-linked national global political networks. WPL will implement a robust strategy of advocacy and communications at national and global levels to heighten the visibility of women political leaders and their Commitments made as part of Generation Equality.

CONTEXT

Now more than ever, it is critical that women have the *tools, networks, and opportunities* they need to assume positions of political leadership and to effectively use their power within government structures and decision-making bodies. Thus equipped, women leaders can lead the drive toward more sustainable and inclusive futures in their individual countries and at the global level.

Women's political participation and leadership continues to fall far short of the goal of gender-parity in almost every country worldwide. The result is a gender and power imbalance that limits the influence and input that women can exert over virtually every aspect of public and economic life. This imbalance must be redressed, especially in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to expose and exacerbate long-standing inequalities. If society is to “build forward” at this crucial moment, it must build upon a gender-responsive foundation.

The **Agreed Conclusions** reached at the 65th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) in March of 2021 highlighted the urgency of this issue. Through these Conclusions, and in the lead-up to and realisation of Generation Equality, UN Member States and world leaders have pledged to significantly accelerate the pace of progress to ensure women's full participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making in government and the public sector. In order for these pledges to become reality, concrete policy changes must be implemented within legislative structures at the national level, pushed forward by political leaders working to engage, advance, and create commitment amongst political decision-makers on the priorities of gender equality .

WPL is uniquely placed to support both incumbent and emerging women political leaders to identify, strategise, and network together, to drive policy and legislative changes that secure greater equality for women leaders at national and sub-national levels and within the framework and global momentum of CSW65 and Generation Equality. This includes, for example, working directly with women political leaders to:

- Change laws and policies that discriminate and hinder women's equal participation in public life;
- Devise innovative mechanisms to promote women as leaders in political spaces;
- Support young women to view themselves as leaders, and create pathways for them to attain and effectively use political power.

COMMITMENT GOALS

Together with partners, WPL will:

- Activate its global network of thousands of women political leaders (Ministers, Members of Parliament, Mayors, and other senior leaders) from 130 countries to engage with Generation Equality in sparking the transformation of political parties and systems, in order to reinforce legislative changes toward greater gender equality.
- Facilitate network-building among women politicians in dozens of countries through engagement in high-level convenings and power discourses that drive transformative political change and tangible impact at national levels, including through official national Commitments to Generation Equality and women's leadership. This includes advancing gender-responsive public policies, legislation, and public investments focused on Generation Equality priorities.
- Bridge the existing inter-generational political disconnect between women in politics and leadership by creating safe spaces and strengthening networks for:
 - Open dialogue and building camaraderie;
 - Encouraging cross-generational learning;
 - Sharing leadership best practices;
 - Leveraging tangible support;
 - Activating and strengthening new and existing networks of women to engage in politics and leadership.
- Significantly accelerate women's participation in key decision-making bodies, policy formulation, and implementation, applying a data-supported gender lens to strengthen existing progressive systems.
- Advance the development and visibility of powerful evidence-based resources like the **Reykjavík Index for Leadership**, an innovative research tool that enables leaders to better understand where prejudices prevail in society's perceptions of women and men in leadership. WPL will strive to make the findings of this work and other evidence-rich tools available to governments, Member States, advocates, influencers, and other leaders to advance their work on overcoming societal barriers and biases.
- Provide WPL's global network of women leaders with access to evidence-based data, research, and necessary tools to develop and advance policy and programmatic initiatives that directly advocate for and support increasing the number of women – in all their rich diversity – in positions of political leadership.

COMMITMENT OUTCOMES

Results of this active dedication by WPL and partners will include:

- More women political leaders will be directly involved in Generation Equality and in driving the process and implementation of Commitments at the national level.
- Greater national public investments will be made in Generation Equality priorities, including but not only through **IDA20**.
- Stronger, more gender-equal national public policies and legislative frameworks will be advanced and/or ratified, with existing discriminatory laws challenged and abolished.
- More women (including girls and young women) will become political leaders in their countries and regions.
- Demands around Generation Equality and women's political leadership will increase and intensify.
- The commitment of political leaders, globally and nationally, to women's leadership and Generation Equality priorities will be strengthened and extended.
- The visibility, influence, and significance of women leaders of diverse dispositions will be heightened.
- Changes in perception and shifting of restrictive gender norms around the role of women in politics will be actively pursued.
- Negative stereotypes of women in positions of political leadership will be contested and fought, to further reduce barriers to women's political participation and leadership.

PROPOSED STRATEGY AND ACTIONS

Political and legislative transformation

Women in political leadership with the drive and the influence to create change require three supports: **communication, connection, and community**. Optimising the power of communication and connection builds new communities of knowledge for women political leaders everywhere.

WPL seeks continuously to drive transformative change through the facilitation of high-level political networks, convenings, and power discourses in dozens of countries, including low- and middle-income economies and nations across the Global South, always in cooperation with women politicians and leaders including Ministers, Parliamentarians, and Senators.

These convenings are routinely led and activated by **WPL Country Ambassadors**, officially appointed by the relevant political leadership of their respective countries to act as a national representative in the achievement of WPL's mission. All current WPL Country Ambassadors hold influential leadership positions, whether as Parliamentarians, Speakers or Deputy Speakers of Parliament, or Ministers of State.

Over the next five years, WPL and partners will hold twice-annual high-level convenings with women politicians focused on gender-equality priorities. These will be co-designed and co-hosted by WPL and designated national members of the WPL community of women political leaders. All convenings will seek to secure commitments on, and drive action and investment in, women's leadership and Generation Equality objectives.

WPL and partners will activate their networks of women political leaders, develop a structure for the organisation of successful political discourses, and provide all materials and training for outcome-oriented engagements. Outcomes will be oriented to nationally-developed and contextual legislative changes that positively impact gender equality, perception shifts and the challenging of restrictive gender norms, and positive changes in both the number of women political leaders in office and their personal capacities to lead and drive societal transformation.

Moreover, WPL will provide analysis and information on how a country can best support Generation Equality objectives, also providing guidelines for speakers, Commitment guidance, and connection to relevant representatives at UN Women, the World Bank, the OECD, and other international fora.



WPL further proposes to facilitate nationally-led support structures and/or resources that can increase implementation capacity and assistance for WPL Country Ambassadors, helping to drive their organisation and management of convenings and outcomes.

Following each convening, WPL will monitor and document the Commitments and outcomes of each engagement throughout the next five years, in cooperation with the women politicians and partners in the respective countries.



YOUNG WOMEN'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

WPL will leverage its networks at national and global levels to identify, engage, and mentor girls and young women who aspire to, or who already hold, positions of political leadership in their countries.

As an enhancement of its ongoing **#Girl2Leader** initiative, WPL will also engage girls and young women in Generation Equality, to support their growth and open pathways to greater political power and influence. This will enable them to both shape and deliver on the objectives of Generation Equality within national political and public policy spheres.

#Girl2Leader was launched in 2017 under the patronage of President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca of Malta (2014-2019), in order to connect today's women leaders with the next generation. The initiative provides girls and young women with the space, knowledge, and contacts they need to build their capacities and knowledge of political processes through a unique mentoring approach. Over the past three years, Members of Parliaments from almost 20 countries across four continents as well as Members of the European Parliament have hosted activities in collaboration with the **#Girl2Leader** programme. Each year, this programme takes centre stage on the International Day of the Girl, when its impacts are amplified through a series of tailored messages.

ADVOCACY AND AMPLIFICATION

WPL is committed to a holistic communication-and-advocacy strategy that widens and magnifies the visibility, significance, and influence of women's leadership at national and global levels. The current global context has plainly revealed fault lines in terms of unequal leadership; in order to build forward, women must be equally represented in both leadership and decision-making positions.

Through robust communication and advocacy efforts around the involvement of women politicians in Generation Equality, WPL will institute a series of hybrid and/or virtual activities at various national, regional, and global levels, in order to showcase the following:

- The commitments made by women politicians engaged in the networks and convenings led by WPL and partners in as many as 50 countries;
- The current status of those commitments;
- Outcomes from these commitments at the national level.

WPL's global advocacy efforts toward the actualisation of valiant Generation Equality Commitments in line with Generational Equality's priorities will in turn drive catalytic actions with following goals:

- Fundamental gender-progressive policy change.
- Increased representation and participation of women in leadership.
- Deconstruction of unjust gender biases, stereotypes, and perceptions.
- Heightened visibility and influence of women in leadership.
- Strengthened collective women's voices and access to networks.
- Elevated awareness and demands for accountability on gender equity.
- Expanded spaces for candid discourses on women and leadership.



ABOUT WPL

Founded in 2013, Women Political Leaders (WPL) is the global network of women in political office. The mission of WPL is to increase both the number and the influence of women in political leadership positions. In all its activities, WPL aims to demonstrate the positive global impact of more women in political leadership.

Together with partners, WPL:

- Fosters and supports a growing network of women leaders around the world, including young women leaders. Currently, WPL supports a network of thousands of women political leaders across 130 countries. WPL also leverages the insights, connections, and capabilities of dedicated WPL Country Ambassadors, who are officially appointed by the relevant political leadership entity of their respective country to act as its representative in the fulfillment of WPL's mission. There are currently over 60 WPL Country Ambassadors spanning Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, Oceania, and South America.
- Works at national, regional, and global levels to promote dialogue on gender equality among leaders and decision-makers.
- Advocates for women's effective and meaningful participation in politics
- Generates evidence-based data to help shape gender-equity policies at the national level.

Women Political Leaders is a co-leading organisation of the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Feminist Movements and Leadership (Action Coalition 6). As a result, WPL is uniquely placed to ensure strong links between national legislative frameworks and the global aspiration of Generation Equality to accelerate progress for gender equality by 2030. The selection of WPL as a key partner in this visionary project ensures that the focus on the role of women politicians (both incumbent and up-and-coming) will remain a cornerstone of Generation Equality.

