

Declaration of the Regions on their Commitment to Women's Human Rights and Gender Justice

Barcelona, 20 November 2023

Considering the double commitment to guaranteeing the Human Rights of women, in all their diversity, and to making gender equality effective in all areas in order to promote free, just, egalitarian, and therefore feminist societies;

Taking into account the recognition by the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments of the urgent need to carry out radical and systemic transformations in order to achieve gender equality in the world and the key role that regional governments play in achieving territories free from gender inequalities, sexist discrimination, and violence against women and girls;

Recognizing our determination, as sub-state levels of government, to actively participate in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda and the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action of the United Nations;

In line with the priority theme of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) for the year 2024, namely "Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective."

From the Organization of United Regions (ORU FOGAR), as an international organization made up of regions from all over the world:

1. We consider that

There remain numerous challenges to achieving gender equality both globally and in every country and region of the world:

- The various forms of violence against women and girls constitute the main security and public health problem facing all societies, whether in the sphere of partnership and family, or in work, education, community, digital, political, and institutional environments. This structural violence requires profound cultural and social change for adequate reparation, as well as for its prevention and complete eradication.
- The current social, economic, and cultural system continues to normalize the inequalities and discriminations faced by women and girls, which perpetuate the feminization of poverty worldwide, causing serious material deprivation and lack of economic autonomy, greater labor precariousness, as well as time poverty, energy poverty, and menstrual poverty.
- The sexual division of labor still predominantly assigns domestic and care work to women, both unpaid and paid, especially to migrant women; work that continues to be invisible and scarcely valued socially, despite the fact that care is essential for the

sustainability of life.

- Educational systems and lifelong vocational training still fail to fully incorporate gender equality and coeducation as guiding principles to combat gender roles and stereotypes. The transmission of knowledge still stems from an androcentric perspective presented as universal, objective, and neutral; inequality in expectations, levels of demand, and evaluation of attitudes persists due to a structural sexist bias that reproduces behaviors and values sustaining unequal relationships and violence against women and girls.
- Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the effects of the climate emergency, such as desertification or pollution, especially indigenous women and girls and those living in rural areas. The climate crisis has a direct impact on the exercise of their fundamental rights, as the direct impact of the climate crisis is amplified by the gender inequalities and structural violence they face, affecting the rights to food, health, development, and even the right to life itself.
- Sexual, reproductive and (non) reproductive rights are human rights that recognize the exercise of sexual and reproductive freedom without discrimination, coercion, or violence. Violations of these rights around the world and the persecution of those who defend them persist and have worsened with the global rise of reactionary and anti-rights movements.
- The deficit in the incorporation of the gender perspective and the limited intersectional approach of laws and public policies directly affect the persistence, reproduction, and amplification of gender inequalities, based on a supposed neutrality that disregards women's needs, different starting points, and aspirations, and that does not take into account the intersection of different axes of inequality in people's lives (gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, ethnic-racial origin or identity).
- For equality policies to be effectively institutionalized, strong, high-level government structures with sufficient financial resources are required. These must have the capacity to incorporate the gender perspective transversally with an intersectional approach in all governmental actions, thereby guaranteeing the respect of the fundamental rights of women and girls, considering how gender intersects with other axes of inequality.
- The political overrepresentation of men in decision-making spaces persists, constituting a serious deficit for democracy, good governance, sustainable development, security, and peace in the world. To transform gender relations and overcome this deficit, it is essential to incorporate positive action measures in all areas that address the structural causes underlying gender inequity with a multidimensional approach, in order to achieve a firm and sustained impact aimed at substantive gender equality.

A Global Feminist Agenda is not possible without local and regional feminist agendas to drive and develop it:

- Efforts to advance gender justice are always localized, since rights are always guaranteed in a specific territory. For this reason, the role of regional governments is fundamental.
- Regional governments are institutions much closer to citizens than state governments, since it is from there that most public services are provided and policies implemented, and therefore they have a greater capacity to detect and provide more agile and tailored responses to the needs of the population and, specifically, of women.
- It is also the sub-state level that constitutes, in the first instance, the gateway to women's political representation and participation, through regional parliaments and governments.
- It is the level closest to women's and feminist associations, with which regional governments interact in the provision of services for women, in processes of participation and consultation in policymaking, and which they support in financing their projects.
- Regions are often the promoters of innovative policies to advance gender justice, which later spread from the bottom up (state or inter-regional level), and at times of blockage or regression at the state level, can be the arena where gender reforms continue to be developed and deepened.

2. It is decided to create the Gender Equality Working Group of the Organization of United Regions / World Forum of Regional Governments and Associations of Regions (ORU FOGAR), assuming the following objectives:

2.1. Firstly, in line with the Marseille Declaration, Declaration of the Regions on their participation in the governance of globalization; the Euskadi Declaration, Declaration for a new commitment in favor of the regions; and the Córdoba Declaration of supra-regional commitments for gender equality, approved by the sub-state governments members of ORU FOGAR in 2007, 2017 and 2023, respectively, the aim is to articulate a strategic alliance to strengthen the advocacy capacity of ORU FOGAR and regional governments in multilateral workspaces related to the advancement of the Global Feminist Agenda, through:

- The development of political positions and advocacy declarations before the United Nations and multilateral bodies of continental or sub-continental scope on women's human rights and gender justice.
- The planning of a strategic agenda that includes participation in events simultaneous or parallel to those organized by states, global networks of regions and sectoral

networks (CSOs), as well as with other strategic stakeholders, such as the international women's movement.

2.2. Secondly, the objective is to promote and strengthen the role of regional governments as key actors in promoting women's human rights, which requires:

- Encouraging exchanges among ORU FOGAR member regions to share good practices, promote projects, generate studies and indicators that contribute to accelerating regional feminist agendas, both to address immediate needs and structural and strategic issues.
- Strengthening monitoring work on the regional implementation of multilateral agendas on women's human rights, gender equality, and those with greater gender impact, such as the 2030 Agenda.
- Contributing to mainstreaming the gender perspective and intersectional approach in all ORU FOGAR actions.

3. Recognizing our proactive role in advancing free, egalitarian, and just societies, as well as in complying with global and regional women's human rights treaties and conventions, highlighting the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the gender-sensitive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We, the regional governments members of ORU FOGAR, formalize this Gender Equality Working Group, to contribute to the radical change we pursue as a global community, committing ourselves to its objectives and working in alliance to achieve significant structural changes that guarantee women's and girls' rights and gender justice in our territories and throughout the world.

Feminist transformation is neither utopian nor impossible. We will achieve gender equality through the momentum of interregional cooperation and a common agenda.