



Gender and Trade Coalition Unity Statement

We, women's rights organisations, movements and allies committed to advancing women's human rights, come together to form the Gender and Trade Coalition¹ in the firm belief that a feminist alliance on trade justice is required to address the pernicious impact of trade rules on women's human rights and to produce informed policy responses addressing the structural causes of gendered human rights violations.

We welcome the increasing recognition from governments and institutions that trade and investment rules create gendered consequences. We are concerned, however, that common policy responses are simply designed to increase the numbers and role of women involved in the free flow of capital, resources, and labour. This approach positions women as instruments of trade growth, failing to address any adverse discriminatory and exploitative consequences of the global, rules based neoliberal order on women's human rights. This is regardless of the significant role women play as producers, consumers, traders, workers, and principal providers of unpaid care.

The movements and organisations we represent recognise that the policies of austerity–trade liberalisation; finance, investment and labour deregulation; privatisation of public goods and services; and the constraints on public policy making and service delivery–produce devastating human rights outcomes for many of the world's women.

We believe the guiding principles of the global economic order upon which trade and investment rules are built are fundamentally destructive for the advancement of women's human rights. We recognise that neoliberalism, austerity, and trickle-down economics has failed around the world, yet the rules of this model are being cemented and deepened through trade and investment rules. We believe that the existential crises facing humanity–climate change, mass displacements and migration, obscene inequality and growing authoritarian, patriarchal governance–are linked to the global economic rules that have shaped the past forty years.

Trade rules constructed around principles of competition rather than solidarity, growth rather than human and sustainable development, consumption rather than conservation, individualism rather than public good, and market governance rather than participatory democracy cannot be the basis of a trade agenda that advances women's human rights.

¹ For organisations interested in joining the Coalition to actively shape a feminist trade justice agenda, please sign our Unity Statement at bit.ly/JoinGenderTrade.

We believe that economic cooperation and multilateralism based on equitable, fair, sustainable, and gender equality principles can play a significant part in advancing women's human rights. Global cooperation—rooted in principles of transparency, democracy and participation—that ensures capital contributes to the public goods and services necessary for the fulfilment of human rights is necessary. Global cooperation that redresses harm resulting from global trade supply chains is essential.

We believe that trade policies must affirm the primacy of governments' human rights obligations under the UN Charter and international treaties and customary laws. Should trade policies diminish state capacity to meet human rights obligations, including the right to development, they must be modified.

We believe trade rules must not increase protections for multi-national corporations who are exerting a gigantic influence on trade policy making, avoiding taxes and accountability and exploiting labour, natural resources and personal data for their own profit maximisation. Trade rules must increase accountability of corporations who commit grave human rights violations, rather than provide corporations with unique recourse when judicial systems hold them accountable.

We believe trade policies should meet sustainable development needs of all countries, especially developing and Least-Developed countries, and the people including the women within these countries. Therefore trade policies must ensure the widest possible access to essential medicines, technologies and data and information, rather than restrict access. Trade policies should promote the sharing of seeds, resources and knowledge rather than penalising solidarity. Trade rules should expand and not limit governments' capacities for broad-based and decent job creation based on living wages, especially for women. Trade rules should support governments to develop pro-poor policies and access to food including through the provision of food subsidies, public stockholdings and through providing preferential support to local, especially small-scale, women producers. We believe trade rules should support, not discourage, the growth of public spending on and ownership of public goods and services essential for human rights and the reduction and redistribution of women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care work. These include food, water and sanitation, energy, infrastructure, transport, early childcare and education, healthcare services—rather than encourage privatisation.

We believe powerful vested interests should be prevented from influencing trade policies or providing financial support to political parties where they stand to benefit from the outcomes of trade negotiations. Instead trade policies should be developed democratically and facilitate informed participation in decision and consent processes by representatives of those most potentially impacted, such as women farmers, women workers, and Indigenous women.

We form this coalition to increase consciousness, capacity, research, and advocacy for trade and investment policies that facilitate a more equitable, socially just and sustainable global society in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms are actively promoted and can be fully enjoyed by all women.