

Inter-Council Network celebrates new Feminist International Assistance Policy

For Immediate Release

June 12, 2017 - The Inter-Council Network of Provincial and Regional Councils for International Cooperation (ICN) commends Global Affairs Canada on the launch of Canada's new [Feminist International Assistance Policy](#) (IAP), launched on 9 June 2017 by the Minister of International Cooperation and La Francophonie Marie-Claude Bibeau. A network of eight councils, representing nearly 400 civil society organizations (CSOs) from coast to coast to coast, the ICN appreciates the many elements of the IAP that reflect the voice and recommendations of CSOs and are encouraged by the commitment to a whole of Government approach to key global challenges.

The IAP echoes key recommendation made by the [ICN National Submission](#) to the International Assistance Review (IAR) including:

- Linkages to the Sustainable Development Goals,
- A human-rights based approach,
- A focus on the poorest and most vulnerable communities and moving towards a more flexible and responsive definition of geographic engagement,
- A commitment to take into account the perspective of those who receive assistance, consistent with the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) Accountability Act.

Janice Eisenhauer, Executive Director of the Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, a member organization of three of the provincial and regional councils of the ICN¹, is encouraged by the announcement, "This policy looks beyond the human capital of this country to find solutions to overcome barriers to the advancement of women, and more to the human capital of the host country to find solutions to problems they are more intimately familiar with—to think about the people and what they can do, more than about the things we give them." Jocelyn Leblanc, a youth delegate to the policy launch from the Atlantic Council for International Cooperation (ACIC), further reflects, "Requiring all CSOs working in international cooperation to adopt a gender-based approach is a win for equality; a win for justice; and a win for everybody."

The IAP outlines [six interlinked areas of action](#) with a major cross-cutting focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. This would be supported by a new fund of \$150 million over five years to respond to needs of local women's organizations in developing countries that are working to advance the rights of women and girls and promote gender equality, through the new Women's Voice and Leadership Program. All the areas of action are set to be supported by additional funds that were announced previously in the year including \$650 million over three years for sexual and reproductive health and rights, and a \$100 million fund for Small and Medium-Sized CSOs, and \$2.65 billion pledged at the Paris Climate Agreement.

Though the ICN commends the launch of this new policy, it remains hopeful Canada will commit to increase its overall levels of ODA to meet the international target of reaching 0.7% of Gross National Income. The ICN also continues to call for the development of a clear policy for private sector partnership in international cooperation and the promotion of cross-sector collaboration.

¹ [Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan](#) is a member organization of the Atlantic Council for International Cooperation, the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation, and the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation.

In Minister Bibeau's announcement of the policy, she challenged CSOs to consult and involve local women in decision-making and implementation processes, as well as to share with pride the results, successes and lessons learned from their programs. Jennifer Sloom, Executive Director of the ACIC, responds, "The ICN is optimistic that the Government will commit to more investment in public engagement and education on international cooperation in order to respond to these challenges." The Minister recognizes in her announcement, the need for the passion, and commitment to international assistance, and that this is in the interest of all Canadians. Heather McPherson, Executive Director of the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation, says, "The ICN hopes that it would continue its collaboration with Global Affairs Canada in the process of putting policy to action, and together ensuring that a comprehensive public engagement policy and strategy is an integral component of this new feminist IAP."

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The Inter-Council Network (ICN) is a dynamic coalition of the eight provincial and regional member-based Councils for International Cooperation across Canada committed to social justice and social change.