

# WOMEN ENERGIZE WOMEN

## Blog Article

## How can a feminist foreign policy further the energy transition?

The feminist approach to foreign policy is quite new to the political arena. It was first announced in October 2014 by Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Margot Wallström. Gender equality was implemented as the fifth UN Sustainable Development Goal in 2015. It has undoubtedly had an impact on different levels of politics, but what does a feminist foreign policy mean specifically? In 2018 Wallström's successor Ann Linde launched a feminist foreign policy handbook. It defines the concept of feminist foreign policy as "a working method and a perspective that takes three R's as its starting point [women's and girls' rights, representation, and resources] and is based on a fourth R [the reality in which they live]."

Other countries followed: Canada in 2017, France in 2019, Mexico in 2020, Germany in 2022. But while using the same term they differ in their strategies. Sweden links the feminist approach to domestic policy and international obligations, Canada focusses on women's economic empowerment. However, there are commonalities as well. For example, both countries seek to promote and legalize abortion around the world.

### Including not just women

While the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) applauded Sweden for opening the ground to combine feminism and foreign policy, it also criticized the binary focus and wished for a more inclusive gender approach. ICRW defines feminist foreign policy thusly: "Feminist foreign policy is the policy of a state that defines its interactions with other states, as well as movements and other non-state actors, in a manner that prioritizes peace, gender equality and environmental integrity, enshrines the human rights of all, seeks to disrupt colonial, racist, patriarchal and male-dominated power structures, and allocates significant resources, including research, to achieve that vision. Feminist foreign policy is coherent in its approach across all of its levers of influence [e.g. defense, diplomacy, trade, immigration, aid (if applicable)], anchored by the exercise of those values at home, and is co-created with feminist activists, groups and movements, at home and abroad." ICRW expands on Sweden's three R's of rights, resources, and representation, and adds "research & reporting" and "reach" to the list.

## Linking the energy transition

Renewable energy like solar and wind power are sometimes associated with a democratic and egalitarian organization of power: They can be set up disconnected from the main energy grid and decentrally organized. Therefore, the potential for democratization and a more equal access to energy is central to the benefits that renewables offer. However, the design of renewable energy policies needs to have the idea of equal participation at its core. Otherwise, there is the risk of reproducing power dynamics that continue to exclude women from shaping the energy system. As the German Women's International League for Peace and Freedom puts it: "Renewable energy systems do not guarantee democracy and equality, as they can be easily harnessed by authoritarian and exploitative regimes. Indeed, the development of many large-scale renewable energy projects has involved land grabs and 'energy dispossessions' typical of fossil fuels and biofuels, 'increas[ing] the precariousness of vulnerable communities." Hence, if feminist foreign policy is carried out, it has a strong potential to foster the inclusion of marginalized groups and a just energy transition.

Annalena Baerbock, as the new German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, committed to a feminist foreign policy with her taking office. On the occasion of International Women's Day 2022 Baerbock stated: "If half of the population are unable to participate as equals, no society can reach its full potential. And if half of the world's population is excluded, we cannot achieve sustainable peace and security".

In reverse, if women are set equal and are empowered to leadership positions, they will be able to lead a just and inclusive energy transition, they will bring in their perspectives, needs and ideas and will further inclusion and gender equality in every other aspect of decision making. A feminist foreign policy helps not only to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals, but also means working towards an inclusive global society and peace among states.

## Women Energize Women at the Berlin Energy Week 2022

From 28<sup>th</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 the Berlin Energy Week will take place around the Berlin Energy Transition Dialogue (BETD) 2022. The BETD will be opened by the new German governmental hosts, Annalena Baerbock, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Robert Habeck, Federal Minister of Economic Affairs and Climate Action. A wide range of online events offer insights into important topics of the energy transition. *Women Energize Women* will host a panel discussion on "Women Empowerment in the Energy Sector: Best Practices Worldwide". You are gladly invited to participate in this #womenenergize event, join the discussion or share experiences with our international guests on Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022, 3-5pm CEST. Additional details about the event can be found on the [#womenenergize website](#). Please register via [this link](#).

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Sources:

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