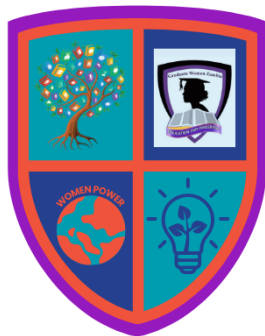




Graduate Women International (GWI)

35th TRIENNIAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND CONFERENCE



**Building the Future: Integrating Culture,
Education and Empowerment for
Sustainability**

**11-13 September 2025
Lusaka, Zambia**

Graduate Women International

GWI 35th Triennial Policy Resolutions

Policy Resolutions - As amended – 19 August 2025



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Resolution 1

Equitable Rights for Postgraduate Researchers

Proposed by Graduate Women Scotland (GWS)

Seconded by British Federation of Women Graduates (BFWG), Turkish Association of University Women (TAUW)

The 35th GWI General Assembly resolves:

To seek adjustments to laws and institutional policies in order to ensure that postgraduate researchers receive the same rights as those who are employed by their institution, with a primary focus on parental leave and for international students, equitable visa regulations.¹

Suggested Plan of Action:

- NFAs should, both through their members and by linking with local educational establishments; Establish the current policies (and inconsistencies) in Parental leave, funding and Visa requirements, using the Case study model (Scotland, a Case Study).
- NFAs should work with their Universities, Institutions, and grant funding bodies to mandate for parental leave policies that are in alignment with parental leave laws for paid employees. Where this is not in the purview for this working group they must then urge Government to change policy to ensure equity, and ensure that parental leave is provided and encouraged for all genders in order to ensure that child bearing PhD students are not penalised for taking leave.
- Using these established networks NFAs should work with their respective governments to ensure that visa requirements for international postgraduate researchers are in alignment with the realities of being a postgraduate researcher, such as (but not limited to) providing flexibility in length of stay, providing reasonable adjustments for caring responsibilities, providing access to the same public services as home students, and tackling misconceptions about international visa holders.
- NFAs in countries where parental leave is granted and/or flexible visas are provided to postgraduate researchers, should share research and stories on the benefits of these practices with NFAs that need supporting evidence to take to their own governments or institutions.
- GWI and its NFA members should seek to support postgraduate researchers who find themselves in such inequitable positions with their University or institution.

Supporting Statement:

While there are numerous ways in which the equitable rights for postgraduate researchers can be supported, this resolution will focus on two: parental leave and visa requirements. These two issues are connected, as study leave due to birth and child care can impact an international student's legal ability to remain on their visa.

Parental Leave: As increasing numbers of women pursue doctoral studies during the years in which they would traditionally begin to take on parental responsibilities, the absence of consistent parental leave policies disproportionately affects women, particularly those from lower income, forcing difficult choices between family and education. In many countries, the current system is unequal, some students receive paid parental leave based on their funding source while others, including self-funded students, do not. This inconsistency

¹ Agreed after discussion on 19th August 2025



creates unfair treatment within the same programmes and risks perpetuating gender bias in admissions and hiring. It is imperative that parental leave is provided and encouraged for all genders, this will create a more equitable and supportive environment for PhD students by normalising leave and preventing students with new parental responsibilities from being penalised. This approach promotes gender equity, reduces career disruptions, and helps all students balance family responsibilities with academic success.

Visa Regulations: Visa regulations create significant challenges for international postgraduate researchers, particularly women, whose caregiving responsibilities often require greater flexibility. Research degrees rarely follow rigid timelines, yet standard student visas impose fixed terms, forcing students to risk their legal status during events like unfunded parental leave, field work abroad, or return home for renewals. Inconsistencies between universities in handling parental leave and visa policies further compound these difficulties. Addressing these issues by aligning visa requirements with the realities of research, providing flexibility in length of stay, ensuring equal access to public services, and tackling misconceptions about international visa holders would help remove structural barriers that limit women's participation and progression in research. In turn, this creates a more inclusive, equitable, and innovative research environment that benefits society as a whole.

A Case Study in Scotland has been carried out (reference 1) which shows the disparity that exists, this study can provide the basis for additional evidence gathering by other NFAs. Also included in this case study is an overview of the globalisation impact of postgraduate researchers, a brief discussion of funding issues, and barriers women face in postgraduate research study. By gathering evidence in their own countries NFAs can advocate for equal and equitable rights for postgraduate researchers, with a focus on paid parental leave, regardless of funding stream, and visa regulations. Recognising this as a global issue, the proposal calls for paid parental leave, visa reforms, standardised university policies, and international consideration of these challenges to create a fairer and more supportive academic environment worldwide.

How is a postgraduate researcher different to other students?

Working Life

Postgraduate researchers are often utilised by universities and academic institutions as staff members, often without the benefit of being employed. Additionally, as their degree is tied to their research, either independently or as part of a research group, project timelines and working hours are more similar to a staff member than a student on a course-based programme. However, because postgraduate researchers are often classed as 'students' and not 'staff', in some cases they do not have the rights, benefits, or support mechanisms that would be attributed to a member of staff.

Contribution of Knowledge

Through their research, postgraduate researchers not only contribute to academia as a whole, but can often bolster the profile of their supervisors, department, and the University, providing funds, recognition, and accolades that do not always trickle down to the postgraduate researcher who completed the work. There are many ways that postgraduate researchers can be supported in terms of equitable rights, but for the purposes of this resolution we will be focusing on parental leave and visa regulations.

Globalisation of Postgraduate Researcher Output

The rights of postgraduate researchers is a global issue because they shape knowledge economies, academic freedom, and fair access to education worldwide. Postgraduate researchers drive innovation, scientific



progress, and policy development, making their fair treatment essential for addressing global challenges like climate change and public health, which can be disseminated globally through publication and conferences. Many are international students, yet face visa barriers, funding gaps, discrimination, and unequal access to opportunities, reinforcing global academic inequality. In several countries, they also endure insecure working conditions without fair pay or job protections, raising labour rights concerns. Variations in how postgraduate roles are structured and recognised further hinder global collaboration and mobility. These issues are compounded when the postgraduate researcher is a woman. A unified, equitable framework for postgraduate rights is crucial across all nations.

References:

Scotland, a Case Study - A report by Graduate Women Scotland that highlights the importance of this resolution, and uses Scotland as a case study for the issues at hand. (see citations and key takeaways from each reference below in the 'Scotland, a Case Study')

<https://graduatewomenscotland.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/scotland-a-case-study.docx>

Parental Leave - Journals

- <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1478929920910363>
- <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/grggenl12&div=9&id=&page=>
- <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10437797.2019.1656580>
- <https://graduatewomenscotland.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/challenges-affecting-women-phd-candidates-for-completion-of-doctoral-educations-a-synthesis-of-the-literature.pdf>
- <https://graduatewomenscotland.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/the-pros-and-cons-of-having-a-child-during-your-doctorate.pdf>
- <https://graduatewomenscotland.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/alone-in-a-crowd-doctorates-no-doddle-for-phd-mums.pdf>
- <https://graduatewomenscotland.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/experiences-of-pregnant-doctoral-programs.pdf>

Parental Leave - Books

- <https://press.georgetown.edu/Book/The-PhD-Parenthood-Trap>
- <https://graduatewomenscotland.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/the-phd-parenthood-trap.pdf>
- <https://commons.und.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4115&context=theses>

Parental Leave - Blogs and Personal Stories

- <https://researcherblogs.ki.se/2022/05/29/phd-parenting-the-good-the-bad-and-the-unspoken/>
- <https://pregnantthenscrewed.com/made-clear-process-i-no-maternity-rights-phd-student/>
- <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/fgr/current-phd/the-research-room/share-your-story/previous-shared-stories2/managing-my-life-as-a-full-time-mama-doing-a-phd-hine>

PhD Visa Regulations - Journals and Websites

- <https://migrantsrights.org.uk/2024/05/24/graduate-visa-scheme-international-students/>
- <https://apps3.aps.org/aps/meetings/march11/presentations/y8-keivani.pdf>
- https://sussex.figshare.com/articles/thesis/Strange_encounters_in_UK_higher_education_understanding_the_experiences_of_visa-required_international_students/24162402?file=42396237



Resolution 2

Advancing Gender Equity in Artificial Intelligence AI Development

Proposed by Women Graduates-USA

Seconded by the Indian Federation of Women Graduates (IFWG)

The 35th GWI General Assembly resolves the following:

To influence the responsible development of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), to ensure its impact strengthens the protection of women's education, health, and economic security in the digital age, through women's leadership in the development of algorithms and inclusive, ethical, secure, and equitable systems. ²

Suggested Plan of Action:

Advance policies for the beneficial development of AI for a positive impact on Education, health, and economic security, focusing on raising awareness of AI Influences.

All NFAs may choose to take action on any of the following areas:

1. Collaborate with existing NFAs and their Global Partners to influence AI policies.
 - Participate with UN agencies, CSW, NGO CSW, and UNECE Geneva for interventions, parallel events, and statements at UN Events, and on zero drafts and agreed conclusions.
 - Advocate for gender equity in AI frameworks, particularly in education.
 - Engaged with tech companies and other NGOs to ensure women's inclusion in AI decision-making.
2. Raise Awareness and Build Local Networks by engaging members and communities to
 - Form local groups to connect with local leaders and school boards using AI.
 - Organize book clubs and discussion groups to discuss and explore AI advancements.
 - Collaborate with local organizations and media to promote gender-sensitive AI policies.
 - Organize webinars and seminars to educate members on AI impact.
3. Advocacy for Policy Change by influencing AI policies and legislation to ensure gender equity.
 - Write letters to legislators advocating positive AI impacts in education.
 - Organize meetings with policymakers to raise awareness of gender-sensitive AI policies.
 - Monitor legislation, testify on AI's gendered impact, and host webinars for tech experts.
 - Request allocation of funding for gender-equitable AI training and disaggregated data.
4. Promote Education and Training for All Generations with a "Leave No One Behind" approach
 - Create local groups to offer AI training for older generations.
 - Engage Gen Z and millennials to support training and workshops for older members.
 - Launch AI programs in rural areas to provide training and troubleshooting support.
 - Apply lessons learned from the COVID-era remote learning and offer similar opportunities.
 - Reach out to rural areas to raise awareness of AI and provide access to its usage.
5. Toolkit Development - Dedicate resources to integrate AI education for all generations.
 - Use existing toolkits to guide older generations to access AI education and health needs.
 - Encourage knowledge sharing across generations and promote gender equity in AI.

Supporting Statement on Gender Equity in AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers vast opportunities but also poses significant challenges for gender equality. Without a gender-inclusive approach, AI development enables and risks exacerbating Governance, healthcare,

² Agreed after discussion on 19th August 2025



economics, and education inequalities. AI can reinforce power imbalances, limit economic opportunities, and perpetuate healthcare, education, and online safety biases.

Despite progress in gender equality, women remain underrepresented in tech, and biased AI designs marginalize their influence in shaping technological advancements. Addressing these gaps is essential for ensuring AI benefits women's advancement. This resolution aligns with the Commission on the Status of Women's priorities, calling for global action to eliminate gender bias in AI and ensure ethical, transparent, and equitable AI systems.

GWI now needs to make AI a critical priority and take leadership to influence positive development that ensures women's participation in decision-making and policy development in AI, Inclusion in Coding, access to education in STEM, awareness and skills to access health, employment, and resources, and influence the legislative process and lobbying. Implementing AI ethics and policy frameworks prioritizing human rights, transparency, and accountability is essential. By doing so, we can create AI-driven educational solutions that advance learning opportunities for women and girls and contribute to the broader goal of gender equality and empowerment.

GWI/IFUW, collaborating with UN Internet Governance Forum and World Summit on Information Technology WSIS 2003 has a track record of advocating for internet and AI systems to address gender bias and to ensure women have access to skills and awareness of digital mastery: These issues are now of much greater importance because of influence of AI.

<https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/wsis20-and-igf20-review-by-the-un-general-assembly-2025>

WSIS was an ambitious plan to address the then-emerging problems of the impact of the internet on society in the following areas. <https://www.unesco.org/en/wsis> is critical to their participation as follows

- Power and Decision-Making: Ensuring women's access to leadership in all sectors.
- Economic Opportunities: Addressing biases in AI-driven hiring and pipeline building
- Health: Reducing gender bias in healthcare, ensuring women's diagnosis and treatment.
- Access to STEM Education and Careers: Supporting women's participation in STEM
- Online Safety - Ethics: Protecting women from gender-based harassment and violence.
- Human Rights and the Internet – "Human Rights and the Internet"

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Opinion/Communications/InternetPrinciplesAndRightsCoalition.pdf>

GWI (IFUW) and WG, since 2003, have recognized digital influence in daily life and have always participated in the following platforms with a track record of work in technology and AI.

- CSW & UN submissions: for gender-inclusive AI policies at several CSWs
- B+30 Review at UNECE: AI was addressed as an emerging issue to add the 12 action areas in 2024. <https://ngocsw-geneva.ch>
- Generation Equality Forum: promoted gender equity integration in the private sector
- Letters: developing template letters for gender-sensitive AI policies and testifying
- Publishing articles urging equitable AI development in education and economics
- COP Participation: Emphasizes gender-responsive AI in climate and tech policies
- Internet Governance Forum (IGF): GWI (IFUW) advocates for human rights and gender equality at the IGF -World Summit on Information Society WSIS. 2003 <https://www.unesco.org/en/wsis>. See above: the Charter of Human Rights on the Internet
- Human Rights and the Internet Charter – WSIS Authored the language and published
- WG - USA Advocacy Toolkit: 4-Step Advocacy Roadmap to engage with policymakers
- CSW Parallel Events: Presented webinars and policy recommendations on AI and equity



References: References to Precedents and Key Global Frameworks:

1. United Nations Resolutions and Documents -Precedents for a resolution on AI:
 - UN General Assembly Resolution 73/417 (2018): *"International Cooperation in the Field of Information and Communication Technologies"* [UNGA Resolution 73/417](#)
 - UNGA Resolution 74/79 (2019): *"Information and Communications Technologies for Sustainable Development"* (SDGs). : UNGA Resolution 74/79
 - UN Human Rights Council Resolution 42/17 (2019): *"The Right to Privacy in the Digital Age"* UNHRC Resolution 42/17
 - United Nations Global Pulse, UNAI: 2019, framework on AI's benefits and risks. [UN Global Pulse](#)
2. Commission on the Status of Women
 - Resolution 63/17 (2019): *"The Empowerment of Rural Women and Girls"*: CSW Resolution 63/17
 - CSW Resolution 67/2 (2023): *"Gender Equality and the Digital Economy"*. Closing the gender gap in technology and innovation is critical to discussing AI's role in future societies. CSW Resolution 67/2
3. Sustainable Development Goals –
 - SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure): development globally.: [SDG 9](#)
 - SDG 5 (Gender Equality): AI can either contribute to or perpetuate gender biases, and this goal explicitly addresses the need to end discrimination to ensure equality. [SDG 5](#)
 - SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality): Ensuring AI doesn't exacerbate inequalities, particularly regarding race, gender, and class, is crucial in achieving this goal. [SDG 10](#)
 - SDG 16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions): AI's implications for justice systems, governance, law enforcement, transparent and accountable institutions, and responsible technologies. [SDG 16](#)
4. Millennium Development Goals -2000-2015, MDG 8, global partnership for development. [MDG 8](#)
5. AI Ethics and Policy Frameworks OECD Principles on Artificial Intelligence (2019): promote responsible and inclusive development of AI, aligning with human rights, transparency, and accountability.
- 6 The UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2021): [UNESCO AI Ethics](#)



Resolution 3

Taking Action Globally to End Stalking, Harassment and Cyber Bullying

Proposed by Graduate Women New Zealand

Seconded by: Australian Graduate Women

The 35th GWI General Assembly resolves that:³

- *NFAs urge their governments to recognise that all women and girls around the world should be able to live their lives confidently, free from stalking, harassment and bullying online and in the real world.*
- *NFAs advocate with their governments to make online and real-world stalking, harassment and bullying, offences in their countries and implement a legislative policy framework that will act as a deterrent and provide enhanced protection to victims.*
- *NFAs advocate that law enforcement in their countries receive more training to deal with online and real-world stalking, harassment and bullying.*
- *GWI's advocacy include a focus on eliminating online violence including stalking, harassment and bullying.*

Suggested Plan of Action:

- NFAs should **urge** their governments to include stalking, harassment and cyber bullying into relevant crime legislation, including a list of stalking types such as surveillance, unwanted contact and harassment (including online), life sabotage, property damage and any distressing or frightening act e.g. threats.
- NFAs should **advocate** for police being able to warn a perpetrator of stalking, harassment or cyberbullying after their first act to help prevent escalation.
- NFAs should **encourage** their governments to enable victims to be informed before police warn a perpetrator of stalking, harassment or cyber bullying and to take the victim's informed preference into account.
- NFAs **consider** engaging with the relevant Ministers in their national governments directly about these issues through writing letters or submissions.
- GWI should **publicise** a statement affirming its support for ending stalking, cyber bullying and harassment of women and girls globally.

Further interventions and recommendations proposed and to be supported by NFAs are to:

- **Enhance cooperation** between governments, the technology sector, women's rights organizations and civil society to introduce and implement policies against online and cyber violence.
- **Identify data gaps**, this will increase understanding about the drivers of violence and the perpetrators.
- **Propose that Governments develop and implement laws** with the participation of those with lived experiences – the survivors and women's organizations to inform prevention and response programs.
- **Hold the technology sector accountable** to increase transparency on digital violence and the use of data.

³ Agreed after discussion on 19th August 2025



- **Integrate ethical use of digital tools** into curricula to foster positive online social norms and sensitize young people (especially young men and boys), caregivers, and educators to ethical and responsible online behavior.
- **Empower women and girls to participate** in the technology sector to inform the design and use of safe digital tools.

Supporting Statement:

In today's digital age, our lives have become intertwined with technology, offering us unparalleled connectivity and convenience. However, along with these advancements, we face new challenges in the form of cyberbullying, stalking, and harassment, alongside stalking and harassment in the real world.

The most common forms of online violence reported were misinformation and defamation (67 per cent), cyber harassment (66 per cent), hate speech (65 per cent), impersonation (63 per cent), hacking and stalking (63 per cent), astroturfing (a coordinated effort to concurrently share damaging content across platforms, 58 per cent), video and image-based abuse (57 per cent), doxing (55 per cent), violent threats (52 per cent), and unwanted images or sexually explicit content (43 per cent).

Addressing these issues is crucial for personal safety and mental well-being. The consequences of cyberbullying, stalking, and harassment can be severe, leading to anxiety, depression, self-esteem issues, and even suicidal thoughts. By understanding the prevalence and impact of these acts, we can actively work towards creating safer digital spaces and fostering healthier online relationships.

References:

1. Graduate Women New Zealand submission on the Crime Legislation (Stalking and Harassment) Amendment Bill, February 2025
2. [National Cabinet has committed to a range of strategies to stop violence against women, but has it done enough?](#) The Conversation New Zealand 1 May 2024
3. [Tech-based sexual harassment at work is common, male-dominated and often intended to cause harm](#)
4. The Conversation New Zealand 30 April 2024
5. [FAQs: Trolling, stalking, doxing and other forms of violence against women in the digital age | UN Women – Headquarters](#) UN Women 10 February 2025
6. [Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: Report of the Secretary-General \(2022\)](#) UN Women 10 October 2024
7. [Accelerating efforts to tackle online and technology-facilitated violence against women and girls: UN Women policy brief](#) UN Women 2022
8. [Stepping up action to prevent and respond to online and ICT-facilitated violence against women and girls](#)
9. UN Women Expert Group Meeting 10 – 13 October 2022
10. [Normative frameworks on gender perspectives in technology and innovation](#) UN Women November 2022
11. [Online and ICT-facilitated violence against women and girls during COVID-19](#) UN Women 2020
12. [Online violence against women in Asia: A multicountry study](#) UN Women November 2020
13. [Violence against women in the online space: Insights from a multi-country study in the Arab States](#) UN Women 2021



Resolution 4

Towards a Comprehensive Maternal Death Prevention Strategy

Proposed by Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW)

Seconded by Uganda Association University Women

Note: This Resolution builds on the previous 1992 Resolution. The CFUW 2025 resolution proposal is to retain Resolve 1 and 2 from the GWI 1992 Resolution, revise Clause 3, and add a fourth Clause. The changes reflect a recognition of the importance of collecting consistent data and using the data to inform decisions to improve the outcomes for women in childbirth, reflected in the CFUW 2023 resolution titled “Towards a Comprehensive Maternal Death Prevention Strategy.”

The 35th GWI General Assembly resolves:⁴

Revised Clause 3:

That NFAs urge their respective governments to develop and implement programs as part of safe motherhood initiatives, to collect and analyze consistent disaggregated and anonymized data about maternal deaths and close calls, and to share those data in confidential form with relevant groups (e.g. health care providers, policymakers, researchers, advocacy groups, members of the public).

Clause 4:

That NFAs urge their respective governments to work on a comprehensive maternal death prevention strategy. This strategy would promote awareness and best practices among healthcare providers around risk factors (e.g. age, child and early marriage, ethnicity, race, low income, mental health issues, housing, education level, access to medical care) and enhance public education of patient populations.

Suggested Plan of Action for NFAs who may use any of the following or other strategies.

- Write letters and contribute to consultations advocating for the implementation of a comprehensive maternal death prevention strategy as part of our national health care programs.
- Participate in public dialogues regarding the issue and impact of maternal death.
- Feature public speakers in a webinar/Zoom or public lecture on this issue, in partnership with local maternal health care providers.

Supporting Statement:

SGWI Resolution 1992 Safe Motherhood:

To urge NFAs:

- To Undertake activities to inform their members about the extent of the problem of maternal mortality and measures for its reduction;
- To Collaborate with other NGOs to develop activities to promote practices for safe motherhood;
- To Urge their respective NFA governments to develop and implement programmes as part of the safe motherhood initiatives.
- Write letters and contribute to consultations advocating for implementing a comprehensive maternal death prevention strategy as part of our respective NFA national health care programs.
- Participate in public dialogues regarding the issue and impact of maternal death.

⁴ Agreed after discussion on 19th August 2025



- Feature public speakers in a webinar/Zoom or public lecture on this issue, in partnership with local maternal health care providers

The 1992 GWI Resolution is comprehensive and encourages education, collaboration and government advocacy to make maternal health safer. Since 1990, progress has been made on a global scale as the maternal mortality ratio worldwide has been cut nearly in half and more than 71 percent of births were assisted by skilled health personnel globally in 2014, an increase from 59 percent in 1990.

<https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/maternal.shtml>

However, globally, every two minutes, a woman still dies during pregnancy or childbirth (about 70 percent of those maternal deaths are in sub-Saharan Africa). Additionally, for every woman who dies, between 20 and 30 will experience injuries, infections or disabilities. Most of these deaths and injuries are entirely preventable.

The leading causes of maternal deaths vary from country to country and women die as a result of complications during and following pregnancy and childbirth. Most of these complications develop during pregnancy and most are preventable or treatable. Other complications may exist before pregnancy but are worsened during pregnancy, especially if not managed as part of the woman's care. The major complications that account for nearly 75% of all maternal deaths are:

- severe bleeding (mostly bleeding after childbirth);
- infections (usually after childbirth);
- high blood pressure during pregnancy (pre-eclampsia and eclampsia);
- complications from delivery; and
- unsafe abortion.

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality>

Fewer women die of conditions such as pre-eclampsia in countries with successful maternal health monitoring systems as the collection of consistent national data on maternal deaths enable health care providers to initiate measures to prevent maternal deaths.

Underage marriage is not confined to low-income countries. In Ireland, for example, it has been reported within the Travelling community. Early pregnancy linked to underage marriage significantly increases the risk of maternal death, obstetric complications, and long-term health issues. Including child and early marriage prevention within maternal health strategies is essential to ensuring safe motherhood for all women and girls.

References:

United Nations Population Fund <https://www.unfpa.org/maternal-health>

MBRRACE- UK. Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk Through Audits and The Saving Lives, Improving Mothers' Care Annual Reports and Confidential Enquiries Across the UK

<https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/mbrrace-uk-reports/maternal-reports>

The UN Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2015

<https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/maternal.shtml>

<https://www.unicef.org/health/maternal-and-newborn-health>



Resolution 5

Advancing Sustainable Development and Gender Equality through International Trade

Agreements

Proposed by: CFUW Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW)

Seconded by Women Graduates-USA

The 35th GWI General Assembly resolves that:

1. *National Federations and Associations (NFAs) urge their respective governments use international trade agreements and related policies are used as tools to maximize efforts to promote and thereby to reaffirm and accelerate the achievement of the 2015 United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*
2. *National Federations and Associations (NFAs) urge their respective governments to affirm commitments/commit to gender equality by consulting with civil society organizations in developing, monitoring and evaluating the gendered impacts of their respective international trade agreements.*

Suggested Plan of Action

GWI will use this resolution to testify to its support in public forums and through the GWI UN Reps. Members may use any of the following suggested implementation strategies or other strategies to advance this resolution:

- a. Seek international trade expertise to support the education of local members about member state international trade agreements and related policies and to explore the impact of specific trade agreements.
- b. Educate local members about the importance of the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- c. Join coalitions to advocate for international trade agreements that support the SDGs both domestically and internationally.
- d. Monitor data regarding the local, regional or national impact within respective NFAs and Associations of international trade agreements on women and children and promote public dialogue regarding the impact of these agreements.
- e. Join coalitions to advocate for international trade policies that include specific gender equality and empowerment targets.

Supporting Statement

This resolution builds on GWI's **International Development Strategy: Third Development Decade – 1980**. International trade agreements have the potential to act as catalysts to improve gender equality at the complex intersection of policies on trade, development, employment, migration and equality (Gender Equality & Trade Policy, 2011). This resolution proposal also expands the potential of the Advancing Sustainable Development and Gender Equality Through International Trade Agreements resolution adopted by CFUW in 2023.

In the era of post COVID-19 recovery, international trade agreements are increasingly important tools for influencing achievement of the interrelated 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (The 17 Goals, 2015).



Development assistance programs and specialized institutions in the area of trade are increasingly attentive to gender issues. Trade agreements impact women as consumers, producers, workers and entrepreneurs. This is reflected in the activities of organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), International Trade Centre (ITC), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)-Prosperity for all and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)-Better Policies for Better Lives).

The WTO is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations. It includes 164 member countries and represents 98% of world trade (World Trade Organization). One of the WTO's main objectives on trade is to become a gender-responsive organization.

World Bank and WTO reporting describes the relationship between trade and the status of women as follows: "Trade can dramatically improve women's lives, creating new jobs, enhancing consumer choice, and increasing women's bargaining power in society. But women's relationship with trade is complex, as it can also lead to job losses and a concentration of work in lower-skilled jobs. To ensure that trade enhances opportunities for everyone - regardless of gender - policymakers should assess the potential impact of trade rules on various groups of people and develop policy responses based on evidence." (World Bank and WTO, 2020).

The rules within International trade agreements are central factors in setting of prices, tariffs, quotas, import and export activity, determination of commodity production, price of agricultural products, employment levels in sectors such as manufacturing, the clothing industry and environmental standards; all of which can have a net positive or negative impact on women. (Women's Issues & Trade Agreements). Gender provisions within trade agreements may include obligations regarding labour conditions, benefits such as parental leave, non-discriminatory labour practices, funding of women entrepreneurs, equal pay for equal work of equal value, promotion of under-represented groups in ownership of small and medium size enterprises, and participation of women in economic and development activities (WTO Database on gender provisions in Regional Trade Agreements).

This resolution aims to heighten awareness of the role of international trade agreements as structures to move the world to a more equitable and sustainable future for all peoples and the role civil society organizations such as GWI can have in ensuring agreements promote gender equality, the alleviation of poverty and welfare of all people.

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Resolution 6

Restore, Preserve and Protect Global Peatlands

Proposed by: CFUW (Canadian Federation of University Women)

Seconded by: Graduate Women Scotland (GWS) and Paraguay Federation Graduate Women

The 35th GWI General Assembly resolves that:

1. *National Federations and Associations (NFAs) urge their respective governments to:*
 - a. *implement legislation/policies to protect and restore degraded peatlands and take immediate concrete steps to prevent further destruction of all peatlands*
 - b. *adhere to the principles of the Ramsar Convention Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands (2002) to halt the worldwide loss of wetlands and to conserve, through wise use and management, those that remain*
 - c. *designate funding for research to urgently identify all peatlands in their countries and study how peatlands benefit our earth and its inhabitants*
2. *National Federations and Associations urge their respective governments and educational institutions to:*
 - a. *educate the public and protect peatlands in order to:*
 - b. *Recognize that these ecosystems are ancient and irreplaceable*
 - c. *Mitigate climate change*
 - d. *Improve food and water security*
 - e. *Reduce forest fire severity*
 - f. *enhance coastal management*
 - g. *decrease ecological concerns regarding peatlands' flora and fauna.*
3. *National Federations and Associations urge their respective governments and educational institutions to engage with industries such as, but not limited to, mining, forestry, road construction and urbanization to prevent direct or indirect damage to peatlands.*

Suggested Plan of Action for NFAs:

Members may use any of the following suggested implementation strategies or other strategies to advance this resolution.

- i. *Educate themselves about peatlands by reading materials, watching documentaries, listening to podcasts, and hosting informal discussions about what they learn*
2. *Promote education regarding the need to protect, restore and preserve peatlands;*
3. *Promote the use of alternatives to peat in horticultural practices in local areas;*
4. *Monitor the indicators of SDG 13 Climate Action and SDG 15 Life on Land (protect, restore & promote sustainable use);*
5. *Identify any peatlands in NFA communities and the protections that exist to preserve them and actively participate in initiatives that focus on the conservation of peatlands;*
6. *Volunteer for, donate to and collaborate with groups that support peatland conservation*
7. *Advocate to their governments to expand and accelerate the designation of protection areas related to peatlands, and;*
8. *Voice your opposition to mining developments that threaten peatlands*

Supporting Statement:

This resolution builds on previous resolutions, **Environment Our Common Future – 1989**, **Environment Our Common Future – 1989**, **Endangered Ecosystems – 1992** and **Protection of the Environment – 1995**. In 2024, CFUW members adopted a resolution specific to the preservation of peatlands given their unique context within environmental and climate issues.



This resolution addresses the urgent need to restore and protect global peatlands which are recognized as one of the most valuable ecosystems on the earth. They serve many functions that positively affect the earth's systems, but most importantly they help regulate global climate (Ramsar, 2021). Peatlands are a type of wetland distinguished by the accumulation of slowly decomposing vegetation forming into layers of peat. They are neither solid ground, nor water, but something in between (Wilson et al, 2020). Located in every climate zone and continent, except Antarctica, peatlands cover 4.23 million square kilometers or 3% of the earth's surface (United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), 2022).

Like all wetlands, peatlands serve as natural filters, purifying water by trapping pollutants and storing organic matter. By regulating water flows, they help secure coastlines and prevent flooding. They perform a major role in providing and sustaining habitat, including critical migratory bird nesting areas, while they provide hunting grounds and food for a vast variety of flora and fauna {*Peat/ands* n.d.}. This in turn supports inland fisheries and freshwater aquaculture which provides livelihoods to millions (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2024). Peatlands similarly sustain forest ecosystems which then support plant and animal livelihoods.

But of all the wetlands, peatlands are the most critical to helping prevent climate change. Peatlands are the largest natural terrestrial carbon sink in the world, trapping and storing 30% of all land-based carbon (Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands, n.d.). When peatlands are drained or damaged, stored carbon is released into the air, becoming a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. When peat fires burn, sometimes for weeks, they release carbon and other toxic chemicals that have been underestimated in their contribution to negative climate change effect (Bosman, 2023). Peatland degradation increases the amount of dissolved organic carbon in water, giving it a brown colour and increasing the cost of water treatment (Landscape Finance Lab, 2024).

Peatlands are known to have a cooling effect on local climates during hot periods through cloud formation and evaporation (Heywood, 2023) and are of cultural significance to many Indigenous peoples (Harries 2021). Experts conclude that Indigenous women face the triple threat of climate change, biodiversity loss and gender inequality (Ecologic Development Fund, 2023). S. A. Thornton et. al make a compelling call for more women to engage in tropical peatland research.

Professional gardeners have long used peat; however, many gardeners have started to call for the use of alternatives and a ban on using peat in gardens (Heywood, 2023). Destruction of valuable peatlands occurring during extraction mining (Rutgers 2024), oil and gas exploration and other destructive projects (Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) News Release Dec 1, 2022) is well documented (Loisel and Gallego-Sala 2022).

Investing in peatland health will maintain valuable ecosystems and combat climate change and GWI is well-positioned to advocate for the urgent action necessary to restore and protect global peatlands.

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Resolution 7

Preserving Deep Sea Ecosystems

Proposed by: Canadian Federation of University Women CFUW

Seconded by: Australian Graduate Women

The 35th General Assembly resolves that:

National Federations and Associations (NFAs) urge their respective governments at all levels to:

- a. Protect deep sea ecosystems in global coastal waters by declaring and/or extending a moratorium on seabed mining until research has been completed and a robust regulatory regime has been developed and implemented.*
- b. fund and support credible short and long-term scientific research on deep sea ecosystems and how to regulate and preserve their biodiversity*
- c. work with other member countries, and in alignment with SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development) and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for sustainable Development to urgently press the International Seabed Authority to declare a precautionary pause on international deep seabed mining activities until comprehensive, science-based and enforceable seabed mining regulations are developed and implemented to protect deep sea ecosystems.*



Suggested Plan of Action for NFAs:

Members may use any of the following suggestions or other strategies to advance this resolution.

1. Collaborate with educational, industry and other groups, to educate and raise community awareness so that local community members can make informed decisions relative to action on this issue.
2. Promote and participate in the development of local strategies for the protection of the earth's deep sea beds.
3. Monitor the indicators of SDG 14 and the International Seabed Authority (ISA).
4. Read and share articles about the importance of deep sea ecosystems to biodiversity and the fight against climate change on social media.
5. Actively participate in initiatives that focus on the conservation of the oceans and marine ecosystems.
6. Through strong participatory civil society voices advocate NFA and Association governments to expand and accelerate designation of marine protection areas related to deep sea mining. Support research and regulation, emphasizing the importance of completing research and developing a robust regulatory regime before allowing deep-seabed mining activities.
7. Advocate with their local, regional and national departments of education to develop and implement school and post-secondary educational curricula on biodiversity of marine ecosystems and the implications of deep seabed mining.

Supporting Statement:

This resolution builds on two previous GWI resolutions, **Marine Environment – 1992 and Endangered Ecosystems – 1992**. It also builds on CFUW's 2024 resolution, Preserving Deep Sea Ecosystems.

This 2025 resolution addresses the need to conserve and protect the oceans. Moratoriums, research, and regulatory frameworks are the tools closest-to-hand to ensure deep sea mining does not cause irreversible harm to the planet.

The ISA's mission is to regulate mining the international seabed for the benefit of humankind and to protect the ecosystem of the seabed, ocean floor and subsoil in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ISA, 2024; Egwu & Ramirez, 2023). Most deep sea beds lie in those international waters (Beiser, 2023). The Area (the international seabed area) and its resources are the common heritage of humankind. The Area covers around 54 per cent of the total area of the world's oceans. The International Seabed Authority (ISA) is an autonomous organization established under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1994 Agreement). ISA is the organization through which States Parties to UNCLOS organize and control all mineral-resources-related activities in the Area for the benefit of humankind as a whole.

Since 1994, ISA has approved eight exploration contracts in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans (Egwu & Ramirez, 2023). ISA has not yet authorized any commercial mining contracts as it deliberates over regulations amid global calls for a moratorium on deep sea mining (Beiser, 2023).

ISA's most pressing current issue is a loophole known as the two-year rule. In 2023, the International Seabed Authority missed the deadline to finalize and adopt deep seabed mining regulations. (Jackson & Karan, 2024) Before regulations are passed, a member nation has the authority to notify ISA that it wants to mine. This starts the two-year clock during which the ISA must develop regulations. If it fails to do so, the mining is implicitly approved (Beiser, 2023)

The ISA should be urged first to close this two-year loophole, and in the meantime, negotiate and enforce rules, regulations, and procedures to protect the deep-sea environment, and to advocate for the conservation and restoration of the global oceans and their resources (Holst, 2023).



Much more research is needed to determine the long-term effect of deep sea mining and how it should be regulated (Gallagher, 2023). NGOs and governments have called for a moratorium until more is known about potential long term environmental impacts of seabed mining (Jarecki 2023). Research must be done into alternatives to mining metals for energy production, including through recovering metals from existing energy sources (Ashford *et al*, 2024; Mendenhall & Helm, 2024). The overarching issue will be how to protect these ecosystems while transitioning to new sources of energy (Chung *et al.*, 2023).

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Resolution 8

International and Domestic Legislation to Prevent Further Destruction of the Natural Environment by Deliberate or Negligent Human Action

Proposed by: Women Graduates-USA, FEMU Federación Española de Mujeres Universitarias, SPAIN

Seconded by: Indian Federation of University Women

The 35th GWI General Assembly resolves:

To educate ourselves and others about the climate crisis and about evidence-based measures to remedy it.

To urge both international and domestic governments to pass laws and enact measures to prevent the destruction of the natural environment by deliberate or negligent human action.

Suggested Plan of Action:

Members may use any of the following suggestions or other strategies to advance this resolution.

1. NFAs should provide education about the climate crisis and possible remedies including an Ecocide Criminal Law for their members;
2. NFAs should encourage academic research to examine the causes and the consequences of the ecocide in their own countries;
3. NFAs should urge their respective governments to enact a Domestic Ecocide Criminal Law;
4. NFAs should coordinate with human rights organizations and other NGOs to raise awareness about Ecocide;
5. NFAs should engage decision makers at the table events to urgently solve the climate emergency and follow up their ecocide accountability
6. GWI should seek collaboration with international organizations in order to bring the issue of an Ecocide Criminal Law to greater public attention;
7. GWI should urge the United Nations, the leader in climate policy, to continue to provide and publicize existing climate information and planning documents with urgent steps and action roadmaps to inform villages, towns, and cities on coalescing their activities toward prevention and preparedness related to the climate crisis.

Supporting Statement:

Note: “Ecocide” means unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts. ~ *Independent Expert Panel for the Legal Definition of Ecocide, June 2021*

1. Ecocide or crimes against nature are a grave ethical issue widely affecting women and girls in all developmental aspects including issues of education, poverty, health, migration, economics, violence, artificial intelligence, gender and indigenous equality, power and leadership;
2. The rights of nature are human rights at this extreme point in the climate emergency;
3. Advocating for the implementation of the ecocide law, locally and globally, within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, and other legal measures is needed;
4. Global environmental ethics for decision makers is necessary to enacting and implementing the ecocide resolution;
5. Collectively addressing the issues of climate change, improving women's education, health and economic opportunities can contribute to reducing poverty and violence against women;
6. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) entered into force on 21 March 1994, with today 197 countries having ratified it with the ultimate aim of preventing



“dangerous” human interference with the climate system;

7. The UN High Commission during the 54th session of the UN Human Rights Council (2023) expressed “enthusiasm” for defining “ecocide” as an international crime.
8. A bill defining ecocide as an environmental crime, based on the 2021 Stop Ecocide Foundation definition, was introduced to the Argentine Congress by MP Margarita Stolbizer on April 1st, 2025. This follows severe fires attributed to climate change and arson, with ongoing investigations into their causes. See [Definition of Ecocide](#), [UNFCCC](#): , and [UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030](#).

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 - 2007 Support for Global Warming measures: “...through its representatives to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) will encourage the establishment of fora in which creative artists and scientists, cognizant of the effects of global warming, co-operate to present to the general populace works of the imagination, comprehensible and persuasive of the urgency of global warming...”
 - 2007 Millennium Development Goals implementation;
 - 2010 Climate Change – Greenhouse Gas emissions prevention;
 - 2016 Use of Carbon Taxes to Reduce Climate Change;
 - 2019: Sustainable Development Goals implementation;
 - 2022: NFAs urge their respective governments to include the perspective of gender in their policies for climate change;
 - 2022: NFAs urge their respective governments to declare a climate emergency



Graduate Women International

Chemin de Balxert, 7-9
CH-1291 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 731 2380 | Email: gwi@graduatewomen.org

Website: www.graduatewomen.org