

**FRANCE'S FIRST  
INTERNATIONAL  
FEMINIST FOREIGN  
POLICY STRATEGY  
IT'S TIME TO DELIVER!**



# France's first International Feminist Foreign Policy Strategy:

## IT'S TIME TO DELIVER!

**F**ollowing the official launch of an abridged version of France's first International Feminist Foreign Policy Strategy (2025-2030) on 7 March 2025, the full text was published in October by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. This 60-page document clearly builds on France's decade-long commitment to championing women's rights and gender equality in the international arena, however it also marks a major leap forward.

It sets a strong course, **both politically and technically, for embedding feminist approaches into France foreign policy.** Although the coherence of France's international engagement may be challenged on several fronts, its assertion of a feminist foreign policy sends out a **powerful signal** amid violent, coordinated attacks on gender equality and feminist movements worldwide. **Despite domestic political instability,** this should enable the French Foreign Ministry **to continue its work** in this area.

For Equipop, whose advocacy efforts helped pave the way for feminist foreign policy in France, this marks the **culmination** of years of campaigning. It also denotes the **beginning of a new chapter**, focusing on ensuring the commitments set forth in this strategy are upheld. **The most urgent aspect is funding.** In an unfavourable budget context, the short-term priority is to safeguard funding for feminist foreign policy from further drastic cuts; in the medium term, to put funding back on an upward trajectory, especially for the Support Fund For Feminist Organisations.

This position paper reflects on the process of the past few years, sets out the main components of the new strategy, and outlines the challenges that already lie ahead, with one central message: **now a framework is in place, it's time to deliver!**

# 1. A VITAL STANCE TO TAKE IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT

## A long-awaited strategy

Since it was established in 1993, **Equipop** has been advocating for the integration of gender approaches and feminist principles into French foreign policy, through a combination of **co-construction** and **public policy monitoring**. Alongside other organisations, regular dialogue with the government greatly contributed to the emergence, in 2019, of France's commitment to pursue a 'feminist foreign policy'. This broadened the scope of successive strategies adopted since 2007, namely the 'Gender and Development Strategy', and the 'International Strategy for Gender Equality'.

France has played a vital role over recent years, in what is an extremely challenging international context. It co-hosted the 2021 Generation Equality Forum and established the Support Fund for Feminist Organisations (FSOF). In addition, French foreign policy regularly upholds women's rights in multilateral forums. A Feminist Diplomacy and Education unit has been set up within the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, working on many fronts both internally and externally. However, this was all taking place outside of any strategic framework, as France's previous reference document, the International Strategy for Gender Equality, came to an end three years ago in December 2022.

From 2023 to 2024, **extensive consultations** were held to develop France's first International Feminist Foreign Policy Strategy. Equipop was involved in this process, alongside representatives from across government ministries, French and international civil society, research and academia, and the private sector. As co-president of the International Commission of France's High Council for Gender Equality (HCE), **Equipop also played a key part in assessing** the implementation of France's feminist foreign policy, through a report presented to two government ministers in July 2023. The recommendations produced were then shared with the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs' steering committee in 2024, and most were included in this new 2025-2030 strategy.

Having been delayed in December 2024 following a change of government, the long-awaited strategy was launched by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs at an event held at the Quai d'Orsay on 7 March 2025, and the full-length document published. With the process now **firmly established**, the government can rely on this comprehensive tool to ensure continuity in its actions.

## A strong political signal

Whether it be labelled 'feminist diplomacy', as it is in France, or 'feminist foreign policy', the internationally recognised term, this strategy is presented as a genuine **paradigm shift** insofar as it **applies across all aspects of French foreign policy**, rather than being limited to traditionally social sectors.

"France places the rights of women and girls and gender equality at the centre of its diplomatic action."

Quote taken from France's international strategy for a feminist foreign policy

'France makes this a priority in every field of its European and international action, such as peace and security, climate and the environment, development, democratic governance, human rights, humanitarian action, economic, financial and trade issues, digital technology, culture, education, health and food security. All forms of diplomatic action are concerned, may they be bilateral, multilateral or consular'; 'As a soft power tool on the international stage and a vehicle for cooperation between countries, feminist foreign policy is a strategic instrument for promoting effective rights for women and girls as an essential condition for democracy and peace'. The course has been set in **terms that leave no room for ambiguity**. This is quite possibly the first French public policy to set ambitious goals for integrating feminist approaches.

The international context has been marked by violent attacks on the rights of women, girls and LGBTQIA+ people, diplomatic relations reduced to displays of hyper-masculinity, severe cuts to international aid budgets, shrinking civic space across many countries, and highly challenging operating conditions, for feminist organisations in particular.

In the face of well-coordinated, well-funded anti-rights movements, **clear political leadership in support of gender equality and feminist movements is essential**. Yet, **several countries**, including the Netherlands and Sweden, the first country to adopt feminist foreign policy, have recently **backtracked** following election results. Although the list of states claiming a feminist foreign policy is constantly shifting, it currently stands at around fifteen, albeit with widely varying degrees of engagement.

For all these reasons, asserting French feminist foreign policy sends a strong political signal. The strategy emphasises that **France 'will take on a leadership role together with multilateral partners and will continue to take initiatives on gender issues in a targeted and cross-cutting manner'**. It further states that France 'will monitor the gender equality accountability frameworks and the impact assessments of all the international organisations and multilateral partners it finances'.

## 2. STRONG, MEANINGFUL CONTENT

### At last, a clear definition of feminist foreign policy

There are three parts to the strategy: ‘**defining** France’s feminist foreign policy’; ‘**scaling up the ambition**: the five priorities of France’s feminist foreign policy’; ‘**implementing** our feminist foreign policy, a renewed method’.

It therefore sets out, for the first time and in substantive terms, what France’s feminist foreign policy should entail. Of course, if in five years’ time this strategy is yet to be suitably implemented, it will in hindsight come across as a purely performative gesture. However, at the time of publication, it addresses a wide range of issues in meticulous detail, associating each to specific commitments and thereby forming a **very strong roadmap**.

‘France’s feminist foreign policy is based on the principle of equal rights, fundamental freedoms and equal opportunities for all human beings. It reaffirms the universality of the rights of women and girls and supports the full achievement of gender equality as an essential lever for sustainable development and the construction of peaceful, just and inclusive societies.’

Quote taken from France’s international strategy for a feminist foreign policy

The strategy is based on **five pillars, which expand on the three R’s concept introduced by Sweden in 2014 (Rights, Representation, Resources)**: ‘rights and freedoms’; ‘women’s participation and representation in all decision-making processes’; ‘action against all forms of gender-based violence and inequality’; ‘resources’; ‘feminist approaches (cross-cutting and coherent action, partnerships and coalitions, training and expertise, concrete outcomes, and accountability).

The notion of intersectionality is not made explicit, as it is still misunderstood within French institutions, however, its meaning is clearly included: ‘France recognizes the need to address the root causes of gender based violence inequalities and violence against women and girls [...] It takes into consideration **multiple and intersectional discrimination factors**’.

The inextricable link between upholding gender equality and the **rights of LGBT+ people** is explained in these terms: ‘The rights of women and girls and of LGBT+ people must be defended in every context and in every setting. France actively fights to defend and promote them.’

### Raising the bar

The second part of the strategy seeks to ‘scaling up the ambition’ in relation to five priority areas.

Firstly, so-called long-standing priorities are once again underscored: ‘defending sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the right to safe abortion’; ‘promoting girls’ education and gender equality in and through education’; ‘eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls and gender-based violence’; ‘supporting civic and political participation of women and promoting their representation in all spheres of society’; ‘advancing women’s economic empowerment’.

Equipop has championed **the SRHR approach** for some 20 years, long before the term first appeared in French institutional spaces, and at a time when women’s economic empowerment was the main, indeed the sole, gender equality lens. The current emphasis on SRHR is therefore seen as particularly relevant and welcome. SRHR have been set as the number one priority in unequivocal terms: ‘defending sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is one of the cornerstone of the French feminist foreign policy’; ‘promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the right to safe abortion, as one of the key aspect of our bilateral relations: embassy action plans, cooperation with health and equality ministries, dialogue with civil society’; ‘defending ambitious positions on sexual and reproductive health and rights and encouraging the protection of the right to abortion within multilateral forums, including in the United Nations (particularly with the WHO), at the G7 and G20, within the European Union and at the OECD’; ‘encouraging United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to make SHRH a priority of their work; supporting programmes fostering SHRH and safe abortion; strengthening international initiatives in this area’. Far from running out of steam, France’s commitment to SRHR, first made almost 10 years ago through its dedicated strategy, is now deeply embedded in its foreign policy.

The strategy’s second major priority is to promote ‘**strong, effective multilateralism**’, which involves championing feminist foreign policy ‘at the **United Nations**, and in all multilateral spaces’, ‘promoting international norms guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of women and girls and rejecting any regression’, as well as ‘fostering a feminist governance in multilateral funds and organisations’. It focuses specifically on ‘jointly implementing a feminist foreign policy at the European level’.

The remaining priorities include addressing ‘global issues’, including ‘defending the rights of women and girls and promoting gender equality in the digital environment and artificial intelligence’, ‘making gender equality a key aspect of human development’, alongside work on **global health** and food security, for example, and ‘using economic diplomacy and trade policy to achieve gender equality’.

While 2025 marks the 25th anniversary of the UN’s **Women, Peace, and Security** agenda, the implementation of France’s own national action plan (2021-2025) was evaluated by the country’s High Council for Equality (HCE) and its Human Rights Advisory Commission. As a member of HCE, Equipop contributed to this assessment, which was submitted in December 2024. The challenge now lies in building an action plan for the five coming years.

The strategy outlines some promising directions, built around a broader approach to the issues. The 5<sup>th</sup> priority seeks to ‘uphold a feminist approach as an essential condition for peace and security, conflict prevention and the response to crises and armed conflicts’.

Finally, the third part of the strategy, focused on steering feminist foreign policy, refers to ‘a new approach’. This includes strengthening interministerial coordination at several levels, led by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, transforming institutional culture, working through partnerships, applying a ‘feminist lens across all budget programmes’, supporting international research and expertise, and rolling out ‘strategic communications’.

## 3. CURRENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

### Abiding by financial commitments

The HCE’s assessment of France’s previous international strategy for gender equality, submitted in July 2023, was organised into three parts: defining, embracing, and funding feminist foreign policy. Two years later, the current strategy has been fully revised in line with the first two recommendations. **Funding** is presented as the third, dedicated priority, under the heading: ‘Using all financial instruments to contribute to gender equality’. However, this priority appears the least convincing. Following successive budget cuts over the past two years, and the drastic reduction in official development assistance (ODA), **the reality does not align with the strategy’s intentions**: budget cuts to the Support Fund For feminist Organisation (FSOF), and multilateral commitments scaled back. In the specific case of **UNFPA**, the UN’s SRHR reference agency cited many times throughout the strategy, the 2025 contribution was simply not paid, despite the contractual obligation signed in 2021.

While it is understandable that a strategy committing to increased funding would lack credibility at a time when all ministries have been instructed to make cutbacks, the current government – and those that follow – must safeguard core multilateral and bilateral financial commitments in the short-term that will form the foundations of feminist foreign policy, and move to **increase funding** over the medium term. France’s position will carry weight only if it is matched by significant financial commitments.

The strategy also recalls the **legal framework** still in force this year: ‘The Programming Act of 4 August 2021 on inclusive development and combating global inequalities demands that 75% of the annual budget commitments of France’s bilateral public development assistance have gender equality as a significant or main objective (respectively, OECD markers CAD1 and CAD2) and for 20% to have it as a main objective (CAD2 marker) by 2025.’ The strategy sets forth the aim to ‘continue increasing the share of bilateral and multilateral funding with gender equality as a significant or principal objective’. Now the political intention is clearly established, the LOP-DSLIM Act targets must continue to serve as a benchmark until 2030. It is indeed worth recalling that these targets do not necessarily equate to additional funding, merely the integration of a gender approach across the majority of projects funded in various sectors.

France is currently very wide of the mark. Last year, cross-cutting policy documents annexed to the 2025 Finance Bill revealed extremely modest results, and projected that less than 50% of commitments would have gender equality as a significant or principal objective. **This figure of 50% was the target set in 2013, for 2017. These figures must increase in 2026.** It is the least that can be expected of a feminist foreign policy.

The strategy also specifies that ‘France will continue to support a wide range of financing that contribute to gender equality and the rights of women and girls, and will foster the development of innovative financing such as co-financing, granting concessional loans for gender equality, rolling out microfinance and the issuance of gender bonds, including development impact bonds focused on gender’. The aim is **not to offload responsibility** for existing commitments, **but** in the current international context, marked by a substantial decline in global ODA, it is indeed important to **build synergies with other potential donors**.

Finally, **funding for the Support Fund for Feminist Organisations is a major issue**. The strategy commits France to ‘continue providing political and financial support to feminist movements, organisations and activists’, reflecting **one of the ten priorities set by the Presidential Council for International Partnerships** in April 2025: ‘to promote women’s rights and gender equality, in particular by supporting feminist organisations and institutions that advance women’s rights. When the strategy was launched on 7 March 2025, France’s Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Noël Barrot, stated: ‘We shall secure the future of the FSOF’.

**The commitments could not be clearer.** However, significant budget cuts have been made in recent months. These must come to an end, and future budgets must start increasing again. The target set at **€50 million per year** must be honoured.

This is crucial to the credibility of the approach, as the strategy recalls, ‘France’s feminist foreign policy is structured around a participatory method. It has been designed together with bilateral and multilateral partners and French and international civil society.’

‘France acknowledges the crucial role and expertise of feminist organisations, movements and activists. It prioritizes their participation in policies and The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs recognizes the crucial role of civil society, an essential global partner, in its strategic guidance document for society and civic engagement (2023-2027) programmes.’ As Adam Dicko, co-founder of the Malian Youth Association for Active Citizenship and Democracy (AJCAD), stated on the same March day in Paris, ‘it is not funding that should dictate needs, but needs that should dictate funding’.

## Developing a multi-level accountability framework

The **accountability framework**, which will be appended to the strategy, is **yet to be developed**. This should include clear, simple indicators that assess both the resources allocated and the outcomes achieved, backed by targets that match **the scale of the issues**.

The strategy sets out two levels of governance: ‘A steering committee, will be responsible for the political and institutional monitoring of the strategy. This committee will be chaired by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs’ Secretary General and will include relevant stakeholders involved in the implementation of the strategy. A technical committee will be responsible for the regular monitoring of the accountability framework. It will organise multistakeholder working groups to ensure the implementation of objectives and will lead the interministerial working group on feminist foreign policy and dialogue with operators’. Efforts to ensure rigorous oversight will need to be sustained.

A clear accountability framework is vital. However, public policy should **be debated across all spheres**: institutions, associations, the media, and academia. Equipop will therefore play its part in bringing feminist foreign policy into the public debate, especially given the concept itself is barely a decade old on the global stage. This tool is **still under development**, and one which must be strengthened, fine-tuned, and enhanced by a diverse range of stakeholders. Equipop’s broader contribution to accountability will therefore mean raising awareness of these issues among **parliamentarians** and the **media**; engaging in dialogue with international **partners from civil society** and **academia**, reiterating the strategic framework in its interactions with **high-level policy makers**; and doing likewise with France’s institutional **implementing partners** – whether agencies or embassies in countries where Equipop supports civil society partners. Indeed, the strategy calls for the ‘full commitment of all implementing partners’.

Given the overall budget context of the coming years, it is clear that budget targets – whatever they may be – could be swept aside in an instant. Ensuring accountability on the financial front will therefore mean going well beyond the framework set out on paper, and maintaining constant political pressure to keep these issues a priority.

Over the medium term, it will also mean ensuring that the strategy's political intent is not misappropriated. Feminist foreign policy, by its very definition, cannot be co-opted for other aims, be they economic, or worse still, tied to conservative or reactionary ideologies.

## Maintaining influence in multilateral spaces

Following Germany, the Netherlands, and Mexico, France hosted the 4th **Feminist Foreign Policy Conference in Paris** on 22 and 23 October 2025. This was the result of intense diplomatic efforts in a geopolitical context demanding a relatively complex balancing act. Reaffirming a common determination to uphold and advance women's rights and gender equality was a vital step. It is now time to implement the commitments made in Paris. French foreign policy efforts will therefore need to extend well beyond the conference.

In early October 2025, the **Financing for Feminist Futures** Conference was held in Madrid, following the **4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4)** in Seville in July. As a member of the organising consortium, Walking the Talk, Equipop worked to strengthen coordination among the three conferences (Seville, Madrid, Paris), and will continue follow-up efforts with the relevant institutions.

Finally, the feminist foreign policy strategy makes several references to the **Francophone Feminist Alliance**, an initiative funded by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs through an AFD mechanism, which will form a major strand of Equipop's work over the next two years. Francophone Feminist Alliance is run by a consortium led by Equipop, and composed of the Mediterranean Women's Fund (FFMed) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). Established in early 2025, Francophone Feminist Alliance **strives for Francophone feminists to be more involved in multilateral spaces**. It aims to build synergies with other international networks, whether French-speaking or not, and seeks to strike a balance between effective collective advocacy and the safety of activists.

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Equipop is a feminist organisation striving for a world in which the rights of all human beings are respected, regardless of their sex or gender, including their sexual and reproductive rights.

To bring this vision to life, Equipop combines social and political mobilisation with financial and technical support for partner organisations and feminist activists.

As a member of several networks (Countdown 2030 Europe, Walking the Talk, AWID), Equipop is actively engaged in feminist movements and mobilisations at the national, European and global levels.



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