

Julia Kulik, director of research for the G7 Research Group, as well as for the G20 and BRICS Research Groups and the Global Health Diplomacy Program, assesses the G20's historic compliance on commitments regarding gender equality.

For many years, gender equality scholars and experts have been advocating for the mainstreaming of gender in domestic and international policymaking. This year, Argentina's G20 presidency has made it mandatory to mainstream gender across the entire 2018 agenda, including its three top priorities of the future of work, infrastructure for development and a sustainable food future. Will this make a noticeable difference to the scope of commitments made at this year's summit and, thus, compliance with those commitments? And will these commitments carry much weight at a time when distrust of multilateralism and multilateral institutions is on the rise?

In the past four years, G20 summits have consistently expanded their focus on gender equality across a variety of dimensions including the number of commitments made and the range of areas they cover. What began as largely an agenda for labour force inclusion in 2014 has broadened to include the needs of rural women, skills training for girls, financial inclusion, and the elimination of violence against women and girls. The reaffirmation of such principles and commitments is as important as ever, but G20 members must now go beyond platitudes to deliver on what they have promised.

Commitments

Action-oriented commitments from the G20 to improve gender equality were sparse in the summit's early years. G20 leaders made their first gender commitment in London in 2009 on labour market equality, the only one that year. The next commitment did not come until 2011 in Cannes, on encouraging female labour force participation. The 2014 Brisbane Summit produced perhaps the best known G20 gender equality commitment – to reduce the labour force participation gap between men and women by 25% by 2025. At every subsequent summit the G20 has reaffirmed its intention to meet this '25 by 25' goal but has provided no information on progress made so far. The 2017 Hamburg Summit made a record 46 commitments specifically intended to improve gender equality or incorporate it as an intended outcome in other areas. This may be the G20's first attempt at gender mainstreaming. It likely reflected the political and social climate as well as the interests of host Chancellor Angela Merkel – a leader in global gender equality governance who championed the issue when she hosted the G7 summit in 2015.

Compliance

The G20 Research Group has assessed compliance with 12 of the 20 G20 summit's core gender commitments made between 2009 and 2016. G20 members have complied at an average of 50%. Among the highest complying members are, in order, Canada, the European Union and Germany. This performance corresponds directly to the results of the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, which reports the gaps between women and men in health, education, economy and politics. The top 10 countries with the smallest gap include four EU members, with Canada and Germany not far behind. Among the lowest G20 compliers, with averages in the negative range, are Turkey, Indonesia and Mexico.

Despite the G20's continued commitment to reducing labour force participation gaps, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) women's chances to participate in the labour market remain 27 percentage points lower than those of men. Women are more likely to be unemployed or

underemployed and to take on a larger share of unpaid care work. They are more likely to work shorter hours for pay or profit. Globally, women make 77% of what men earn – a gender pay gap that will take 70 years to close at the current rate.

Corrections

The Buenos Aires Summit can begin to address past summit shortcomings by reporting on progress made by each member on the 25-by-25 commitment and setting a clear course of action on what must be done in the remaining seven years. Commitments to publicly funded care services and mandatory parental leave are essential for labour force equality. The 2018 presidency hosted the first-ever meeting of G20 supreme court presidents and justices to address, among other things, the challenges related to justice and gender – an opportunity to discuss how G20 members can work to end violence against women and harassment, including by ending the impunity of perpetrators.

Historically, G20 members have produced a consensus document including their commitments to gender equality. In practice, the work needed to fulfil those commitments must be done by individual governments at home. Here is a clear disconnect: at the G20 table in 2018 are leaders who actively work against protecting women's rights and in whose countries it remains dangerous to live as a woman. The 2014 Brisbane 25-by-25 commitment was a significant step towards global gender equality governance, but with no transparent reporting mechanism or transparent results the world is left merely with platitudes.

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