



Socialist International Women

SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN

International Women's Day 2021

DECLARATION

Socialist International Women (SIW) warmly applauds this year's International Women's Day theme of "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world." During this global crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic women and girls are demonstrating every single day their incredible courage, strength and leadership in immensely difficult circumstances. Sadly, this catastrophe has highlighted gross gender inequalities that have existed for far too long within our societies and reiterated the urgent need for women's perspectives and gender specific essential needs to be priority considerations in the emergency and long-term decisions that will be required as we move through this pandemic. It is vital that as our global family continues to respond to this crisis, and as it recovers, the gender-balance of power and leadership, particularly at elite decision-making levels, is urgently re-set to be visibly and meaningfully gender equal and inclusive.

The severe impact of the pandemic on women and girls has already been disproportionately worse than on men, with women bearing multiple burdens including an increasingly fragile economic status resulting in extreme poverty, increased gender based violence and increased carer responsibilities. Women also make up 70 per cent of frontline carer and medical staff increasing their risk of infection¹. Despite this, there continues to be a severe under-representation of women in decision-making dialogues, for example, currently 75% of parliamentary seats worldwide are held by men, with women's voices largely un-heard². This results in a shocking lack of gender perspective in decisions, which is immensely damaging to women. Even well meaning initiatives are not reaching women and girls who desperately need help. One example is the increase in digital initiatives, which replace face-to-face support and learning. The gender digital divide means that far fewer women than men have access to digital technologies and equipment, resulting in support simply never reaching them.

As communities and nations emerge out of this pandemic SIW remains firm in its commitment to increasing the participation of women in all political and other decision-making processes and asserts that it is vital that our plans for the future are strongly shaped by explicitly gender-responsive and inclusive narratives. Socially democratic societies which honour both women and men equally and create sustainable, peaceful communities can only be achieved with consistent gender equality in all aspects of society, including in governance and decision-making.

SIW takes this opportunity to honour and celebrate the courageous efforts, sacrifices and achievements of women and girls during this immensely challenging period in our history, whether this is at home, at work, in our communities or in leadership roles within our governments and institutions.

SIW strongly encourages all of its members and affiliated bodies to stand in solidarity with women and girls everywhere to challenge gender inequalities and insist on gender-balanced decision-making and gender-sensitive solutions to bring our global family out of this COVID-19 crisis with responses which nourish and support all citizens.

1. WHO | Gender Equality in the health workforce (2019) - p.1
<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/311314/WHO-HIS-HWF-Gender-WP1-2019.1-eng.pdf>

2. UN Women | COVID-19 and Women's Leadership: From an Effective Response to Building Back Better - p.2
<https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-covid-19-and-womens-leadership-en.pdf?la=en&vs=409>