Gender equality in German foreign policy and in the Federal Foreign Office
Gender equality in German foreign policy and in the Federal Foreign Office
The phrase “human rights, including women’s rights” sometimes slips its way into official documents. It fits the old slogan, “Feminism is the radical idea that women are also human beings.” Anyone who mentions 51% of the world population as an addendum is in fact not thinking “inclusively”. But the objective of gender equity is precisely that: to guarantee women the same political participation, representation and access to resources that men enjoy. Numerous studies demonstrate that societies in which women and men are on equal footing are more secure, stable, peaceful and prosperous. Thus it makes good sense that women should have equal opportunities.

The year 2020 is a special year for gender equity. It is also a special year for the Federal Foreign Office, which was established 150 years ago. This anniversary gives us an occasion to take stock and to ask what the Federal Foreign Office should look like in the future. One thing is certain: it will be more female. This is not least a question of credibility. When we champion the importance of heeding women’s voices in New York, Geneva, Brussels and many other parts of the world, it should be obvious that this also applies to ourselves.

Much has been achieved since 1870. But we have not yet arrived where we need to be. We are therefore living up to our own commitments, as you will read in the coming pages. I invite you to join us on our path with a critical eye.

Heiko Maas,
Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs
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**Outlook**
Introduction
In the year 2020, the issue of gender equity will be especially in the spotlight. We are approaching the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, which was signed in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Germany is one of the 189 signatory countries. By signing the declaration, we committed to implementing gender equality not only throughout Germany, but internationally. Five years after the Beijing Declaration, in October 2000, the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1325, titled “Women, Peace and Security”. The resolution calls for more closely involving women in all stages and at all levels of crisis prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, stabilisation and reconstruction. It also calls for protecting women and girls from sexualised and gender-based violence during conflicts.

UN Women: The Gender Snapshot 2019

- Women and girls are more likely to live in extreme poverty than men and boys.
- Nearly one in five women and girls aged 15 to 49 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner.
- Women and girls are responsible for water collection in 80% of households without access to water on premises.
- The labour force participation rate of women aged 25 to 54 is about half, versus 94% for men in the same age group.
- Three in four human trafficking victims are women and girls.
- Worldwide, only one in four parliamentary seats worldwide are held by women.
- In the 30 countries where female genital mutilation is practised, one in three girls aged 15 to 19 had been subjected to this practice.
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, from 1948; the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany, from 1949; and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, from 2000, all affirm the fundamental precept of the equality of women and men.

The Federal Foreign Office views the equality of women and men as a priority of German foreign policy. After all, gender equity makes good sense. Societies in which women and men have equal participation are more stable, peaceful, prosperous and culturally innovative. The past decades have seen ample progress towards equal opportunity and equal rights for women and with regard to women’s political participation and representation in all relevant areas of society and politics. But we have not yet reached the finish line, particularly not in foreign policy.

This is why we are promoting the practical implementation and advancement of the “Women, Peace and Security” agenda. We are working to ensure that women’s voices are heeded and that women are more present in negotiations, on missions, at events and at conferences. Together with our partner and intermediary organisations, we are supporting networking efforts among women and women’s organisations. We are preparing women for senior positions in politics.
and business. We are raising the visibility of the issue of gender equity, and not only in public: we are carrying out its principles, moreover, on our own turf as an employer.

We consider it important to take stock of where we are in 2020 and to ask ourselves: What else can the Federal Foreign Office do to fulfil the mandate of gender equality as laid out in Germany’s Basic Law and in international law? An open-ended stocktaking process includes exposing and discussing the large areas where there remains room for improvement. First and foremost, we look in the mirror. The share of women in senior positions at the Federal Foreign Office is slated to rise further, and a balanced gender ratio is a factor of consideration for new hires. When organising events on our behalf, partner institutions of the Federal Foreign Office are contractually committed to invite a quota of at least 30% women panellists and participants. For conferences that we organise ourselves, we make a more stringent commitment of 40%. To invalidate the claim that qualified women are too difficult to find, the Federal Foreign Office is supporting a public database of women experts in foreign policy and security policy. And to ensure that public funds equally benefit women and men, girls and boys, Germany is advocating within the EU for “gender budgeting” – in other words, taking gender equality into account across the board. Furthermore, the Federal Foreign Office systematically evaluates relief projects based on whether and how they promote gender equality and inclusiveness.

Gender equity is not a matter of course in almost any country in the world. But the momentum is newly growing. Close partners such as Canada, Sweden, France and Mexico are sharpening the focus of their foreign policy and taking gender equality into account in all subfields. They are setting the benchmark and inspiring us to orient our future work more keenly towards gender equity. German policy is in a permanent process of evolution. Thus it is only logical for the Federal Foreign Office, likewise, to evolve as an institution.
The 2019 Gender Equality Index: Where does Germany fall within Europe?

(The Gender Equality Index was developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality, or EIGE. It is comprised of six core areas: power, time, knowledge, health, money and work.)
Gender equality in German foreign policy
The Federal Republic of Germany’s foreign policy pursues the objective laid out by the Basic Law: “to promote world peace in a united Europe”. The prospects of an enduring peace demonstrably grow when women participate in peace processes. Germany advocates worldwide for the equal participation of women and men in all areas of society. After all, not everyone has reaped the rewards of progress and prosperity equally, and, by the same token, not everyone is equally affected by crises.

Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world and bears the scars of a decade-long civil war that ended only in the year 2000. Globally, it is also one of the countries with the greatest inequality between women and men. Sexualised violence is so widespread that in February 2019, the government declared it an emergency. Germany is advocating a holistic approach to combating these offences: effectively preventing sexualised violence requires modifying the unequal power relationship that makes women dependent on men. Women must participate more actively in political processes, and do so in leadership roles. For this to succeed, women need to be more socially and economically independent, even in rural areas. This is why Germany is the top provider of funding for the African Women Leaders’ Network (AWLN), founded in 2016, which takes a holistic approach to its mission of strengthening women’s leadership role. With our support, ten national offices of the African Women Leaders’ Network were established by the end of 2019, including one in Sierra Leone. Germany will continue to support the AWLN over the next two years. Additionally, in 2020, the Federal Foreign Office and the Sierra Leone national office are planning a collaborative project with the goal of improving women’s participation in political processes on the local and national levels. Some of the other initiatives include training women peace ambassadors, setting up early warning systems for crises and building a network of young women for senior positions.
Advancing gender equality multilaterally...

...at the United Nations:

Germany’s non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council is in its second year in 2020. We are determined to use this opportunity to advance the agenda of “Women, Peace and Security”, based on Resolution 1325 and its nine follow-up resolutions. We are doing so in the understanding that women play a crucial role in the prevention of crises and conflicts, are an important anchor of stability in the aftermath of conflicts and are essential for resolving crises. Stable peace is more likely when women are involved in the peace process. In peace talks, women occupy only 13% of seats at the negotiating table. Only one in 33 peace talk mediation teams is led by a woman. This is despite the fact that these negotiations often involve a new social order, as reflected in the drafting of a new constitution, for example, and thus determine future power relations. This situation robs women of a voice in shaping the shared future.

What are we doing?

- The Federal Foreign Office is promoting the practical implementation of the “Women, Peace and Security” agenda. For example, Germany has successfully insisted that the Security Council be notified of the implementation status in crisis countries. Germany is also working to ensure that the agenda is considered in all discussions regarding conflict zones and crisis resolution.

UN Resolution 1325 – “Women, Peace and Security”

On 31 October 2000, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1325, “Women, Peace and Security”. The resolution was a milestone in international peace policy because for the first time, instead of framing women solely as victims, it proclaimed women’s important role in conflict prevention and resolution and in peacebuilding.

- Germany is also working to pursue this agenda by seeing to it that women's perspectives are specifically heeded – and not only in reference to topics that directly relate to women and girls. In April 2019, during Germany’s UNSC Presidency, representatives of civil society were invited in record numbers to report to the Security Council on the circumstances in countries undergoing conflicts such as Venezuela, Syria and Yemen.
Small arms claim more lives annually than any other type of weapon. In most conflicts, they are in fact the real weapons of mass destruction. With this in mind, the Federal Foreign Office supports projects that strengthen women’s participation in resolving the problem of small arms. To systematise this, on the sidelines of the High-level Political Forum for Agenda 2030 in New York, Germany established the Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control in 2019. The network’s aim is to advance the implementation of the “Women, Peace and Security” agenda in the area of small arms as well.

At Germany’s initiative, and after difficult negotiations, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2467 to combat sexual violence during conflicts and to bolster support for victims. Sexual violence is used, among other things, as a deliberate tactic in armed conflicts, and it predominantly, though not exclusively, targets women and girls. It is particularly widespread in places where commanders have not issued orders expressly prohibiting it. Therefore, decision-makers’ tolerance of misbehaviour by their combat units is as catastrophic as the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. With the resolution, the Security Council has demonstrated its resolve to establish greater accountability: combatants worldwide are called upon to immediately end sexual violence – even when it is not deliberately used as a weapon of war – and to prevent it in future. The perpetrators are to be held more strictly accountable, including through targeted sanctions by the UN Security Council. For the first time, the Security Council’s resolution centres on survivors: the Security Council demands that survivors be provided comprehensive medical, legal, psycho-social and socio-economic care as well as access to jurisdiction.

How women can contribute to the fight against small arms

Rwandan coach Lt. Donath Tumusine explains necessary security precautions for storing munitions.
Specifically in the area of sexual and reproductive rights, we note with great concern that progress is not irreversible. Germany is making efforts to uphold the current multilateral consensus and is furthermore committed to its advancement. All women require access to sexual and reproductive health. Moreover, all women require rights such as the right to access health services that enable safe pregnancy and childbirth, the power to make decisions over their own lives, the right to information about and access to family-planning methods, the possibility of safer sex (e.g. HIV/AIDS prevention) and the right to sexual integrity. Such access can be vital, particularly for women who, as a result of sexual violence, become pregnant, sustain grave injuries or suffer from psychological trauma. Germany is playing a part in enabling such access in Côte d'Ivoire, Somalia and El Salvador. In Somalia and Côte d'Ivoire, the Federal Foreign Office has supported projects that have used publicity campaigns (e.g. radio programmes, theatrical performances and posters) to raise public awareness of issues such as sexualised violence, sexual and reproductive rights and female genital mutilation in order to achieve lasting change. In El Salvador, legal support was provided to incarcerated women who stood accused of illegal abortions under judicially questionable circumstances and who were being prosecuted or had already been sentenced on those grounds. The project also focused on improving the conditions of women’s imprisonment.

For decades, the Congolese doctor and human rights activist Prof. Denis Mukwege has been working to ensure that victims of rape in the Democratic Republic of Congo receive medical, legal, psycho-social and socio-economic assistance. Mukwege was awarded the 2018 Nobel Peace Price for this important work. Germany is proud to be supporting the Mukwege Foundation in these efforts.
What are we aiming at?

In our anniversary year of 2020, Germany plans to publicise its involvement and initiate new projects. To that end, Germany will continue its commitment on the UN Security Council, but also on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, in the UN Commission on the Status of Women, in the UN Human Rights Council and during Germany’s presidency of the Council of the EU. High-level events will draw further public attention to the “Women, Peace and Security” agenda each month leading up to Resolution 1325’s twentieth anniversary in October 2020.

Furthering the agenda’s implementation is an important concern for Germany. We have called upon the UN member states and the UN organisations to make commitments for implementation by October. On the national level, Germany has committed to 12 measures and aims to draw up gender-equitable guidelines on transitional justice and security-sector reform and to support survivors of sexualised violence. With the Federal Government’s Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, Germany has set itself ambitious goals to reinforce women’s role in crisis prevention and peace processes and to take into account the interests of women and girls in regard to measures of development policy, peace policy, security policy and humanitarian efforts.

In its work to implement the “Women, Peace and Security” agenda, the Federal Foreign Office depends on its network of 227 missions abroad, which in 2020 are called upon to implement visible measures to support the agenda.

Heiko Maas is a HeForShe champion

The HeForShe campaign encourages men and boys to advocate for women’s rights and to actively combat inequalities. HeForShe has reached more than 1.2 billion people globally via social media.
Equality between men and women is one of the fundamental values of the EU.

The Strategic Agenda for 2019–2024, in which the European Council set priorities for the EU institutions' work over the next five years, states: “We need to do more to ensure equality between women and men, as well as rights and equal opportunities for all.”

In December 2019, within the framework of its review of the implementation of the UN agenda for gender equality and women’s empowerment by the EU and its member states (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action), the Council of the EU adopted conclusions on “Gender-Equal Economies in the EU”. In these conclusions, the Council calls upon member states to take various measures to improve equality, for example by bolstering the effectiveness of public institutions and systems for gender equality or by taking measures to prevent and combat sexism and its manifestations in the public and private spheres.

In 2020, Germany will take special responsibility within the European Union. Beginning on 1 July 2020, Germany will assume the presidency of the Council of the EU for six months. We are championing an innovative, fair and sustainable Europe. That includes improving gender equity in the EU. In particular, Germany is campaigning for high protection standards throughout Europe in regard to violence against women, and is also advocating better access to protection and counselling for everyone. Women still experience disadvantages, for example in wages and pensions. From the German perspective, it is therefore important to address the gender disparity in wages and pensions in order to combat poverty among women.

In one step towards achieving this, the EU’s next multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2021–2027 will take gender equality into consideration. The MFF’s budget of approximately 1 trillion euros goes towards research and infrastructure, regional development, agricultural policy, interior policy and security policy. The “gender budgeting” principle helps ensure that public funds benefit all citizens in equal measure.

The EU’s external action is also funded by the multiannual financial framework. In this context, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) is the EU’s main tool for contributing to the elimination of poverty, sustainable development, prosperity, peace and stability. Together with Sweden, Germany is advocating for 85% of these funds to be used for promoting gender equity as a primary or secondary objective and for 4.25% of the funds to be spent directly on gender equality measures.
Gender budgeting in the context of the NDICI

Advancing gender equality in our work on the ground...

Gender equality policy takes place not only in multilateral and EU bodies; it also happens on the ground among civilians around the world.

... in crisis engagement

An important part of the Federal Foreign Office’s work consists of preventing crises, stabilising conflict zones and enabling political reconciliation processes. Women, girls, men and boys are each affected by crises differently. That reinforces the importance of gender-conscious analyses, equitable participation throughout crisis management and the consideration of specific humanitarian needs. In particular, women and girls need better opportunities to weigh in with their perspectives, as this will improve the prospects of our mission’s success.
What are we doing?

- Germany is financially supporting projects to implement Resolution 1325. For example, we are bolstering the resources of women peace activists from Russia and Ukraine and enabling their greater involvement in the reconciliation process. Likewise, in Mali, we are supporting national and international institutions in their efforts to guarantee a comprehensive peace and reconciliation process. Women and teenagers are significant target groups of the project activities. German contributions to the fund administered by MINUSMA, the UN stabilisation mission in Mali, go towards bolstering initiatives that improve women’s political representation and active participation. These contributions also help improve judicial infrastructure with the objective of granting women better access to justice. The Federal Foreign Office is supporting comparable projects in Iraq and in Syria.

- Germany supports the UN Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund, the first UN trust fund representing a global cooperation between the UN, its 193 member states and civil society. The fund enables women’s organisations to contribute actively to crisis prevention and peacebuilding worldwide and to strengthen their role and participation in the humanitarian and emergency relief sector.

- Working with networks worldwide is one of the most effective tools for advancing the objective of gender equality for the long term. Particularly for women’s organisations in crisis zones, networking is an important measure for quickly obtaining relevant information, learning from the experiences of others in similar situations and establishing a modicum of security through publicity. In addition to its support for the African Women Leaders Network, the Federal Foreign Office supports women’s networking efforts in Latin America. At the initiative of Foreign Minister Maas, the women’s network Unidas was founded. Unidas is dedicated to the equitable consideration of women during constitutional reforms and with regard to access to justice; Unidas also champions the participation of women in all stages and at all levels of peace processes. Since the inaugural event in Berlin in May 2019, the network has continually grown.
The drastic economic situation in Venezuela has caused one of the largest waves of refugees and migration of our time. Because they can scarcely subsist there on a day-to-day basis, around 5 million Venezuelans have left the country; most of these now live in other Latin American countries. Due to the tense security situation in the region, women and children are especially often at risk of becoming victims of sexual violence or exploitative labour practices.

Since 2018, Germany has been supporting numerous partners in efforts to guarantee the most vulnerable people a dignified life in the receiving countries with a particular focus on the security and protection of the sections of the population at the greatest risk. For example, women receive comprehensive counselling services and psychosocial assistance. Children are given a safe, child-appropriate space to grow – despite the emergency.

What are we aiming at?

We need gender-sensitive conflict analyses that view the roles of women and men, girls and boys with greater nuance and that, on this basis, identify gender-specific causes, risks and effects of conflicts. In future, we will require this approach from whoever compiles such analyses—whether it is an external entity or one of our own missions abroad.

Moving forward, relief projects – including humanitarian assistance – will be systematically assessed based on whether and how they support gender equality and inclusiveness. The Federal Foreign Office strives for a “gender mainstreaming” approach, i.e. one that promotes gender equality through all our projects. To this end, information from our partner organisations will from now on be more systematically gathered, assessed and harnessed for management.
To ensure that women are digitally networked, a digital communication platform is being developed for Unidas. A prize for women’s rights and democracy is being awarded to attract greater public attention.

... in foreign cultural and educational policy

Alongside political and economic relations, the third pillar of our foreign policy is cultural relations and education policy (CREP), which offers access to areas of society that are often outside the reach of other approaches. For women in particular, this approach can create scope for personal development and social participation. With CREP measures, women are encouraged to tell their stories, to pursue their own educations and to claim their rightful share of public space. To ensure the success of these efforts, the Federal Foreign Office, together with its intermediary and partner organisations, is promoting women’s networking worldwide all the way from multilateral forums on down to the local level.

What are we doing?

- As part of the Alliance for Multilateralism, the Federal Foreign Office has been bolstering its efforts to promote the visibility of gender equality issues in multilateral forums (such as UNESCO) and during bilateral talks with partners. The Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI), which aims to help girls and women gain access to high-quality education, is one of several initiatives of the alliance that was launched last year (in 2019) by the foreign ministers of Germany and France and has already drawn broad international support.

- In the framework of flagship programmes such as the Eastern Partnership and “Deutschlandjahr USA”, there have been targeted efforts to promote networking between and among women in partner countries and Germany. The women are also being prepared for senior positions in politics and business.
Central Asia: Bolstering women in senior positions

The Federal Foreign Office supports the Female Leadership Academy (FLA), which helps women in senior positions, primarily in central Asia, to identify their individual strengths and improve their own visibility as female leaders. Together with the participants, we discuss country-specific challenges and possible strategic and practical responses.

- Around the world, Germany is spotlighting women’s viewpoints by supporting cultural projects for women, even in difficult contexts, and ensuring that women have opportunities to voice their perspectives alongside those of men.

- The intermediary organisations of the Federal Foreign Office champion gender equity around the world, for example by seeking to pave the way for women in developing countries to reach senior positions in higher education and research.
Spotlighting Female Voices: Supporting Women Soloists from Iran

In the years following the Islamic Revolution of 1979, a large segment of Iranian music’s diversity – solo singing by women – was at risk of being forgotten. For a few years now, a renaissance has been under way in Iran. Public interest in music performed or interpreted by women is visibly growing. The Federal Foreign Office is a regular sponsor of the Female Voice of Iran Festival and supports research trips and panel discussions, which include film screenings of the resulting interviews and video portraits. The objectives are intercultural education and networking for the German and Iranian musicians as well as, ultimately, women’s empowerment and closer ties between the countries’ civil societies.

- The intermediary organisations also offer family support services for scholarship recipients. This is an important factor that helps explain why 51% of DAAD scholarship holders are women.
- In goal-setting agreements with intermediary organisations, a quota of at least 30% women is set for conferences and events funded by the Federal Foreign Office.
Processing Trauma: Writing workshop for women in Iraq

Since 2016, in a transformation partnership, the Federal Foreign Office has been enabling a project initiated by a German NGO that organises writing and storytelling workshops, giving women in Iraq the opportunity to process traumatic wartime experiences and memories from the rule of the so-called Islamic State. Run by “elbarlament – cultures of democracy”, the project also plays a part in strengthening the self-esteem of participating women (who are Iraqis from various regions of the country, including members of the Yezidi ethnic group) as cultural creators in public space. In 2017, an associated literary festival, featuring an award ceremony, was held in Basra, Iraq.

What are we aiming at?

Future flagship programmes will also incorporate targeted projects to empower and network women and girls.

Successful programmes such as the writing and storytelling workshop will also be established in other countries.
... in consular assistance

For millions of German tourists and for German citizens living outside the country, our missions abroad are the most important link to Germany for all legal matters. The Federal Foreign Office provides assistance and advice, especially in emergencies. This includes, for example, consular assistance for victims of sexualised or domestic violence abroad.

What are we aiming at?

To improve this care, we will more closely analyse this problem area in connection with particular focal points of tourism. Building on this, a guide will be created for colleagues who work with victims of sexualised violence. In addition, issues of sexualised and domestic violence are to be added to the service manual for consular assistance to ensure that consular assistance is suitably sensitised worldwide.

Advancing gender equality in international personnel policy...

... in peace operations

Via the Centre for International Peace Operations, Germany supports the deployment of civilian experts, including judges and administration experts who assist with the (re)establishment of civilian resources, provide humanitarian support or participate in election monitoring missions. Currently, 41% of seconded personnel are women. Among the senior positions, 12 of the 33 seconded German persons are women.

... in election monitoring missions

Of the 432 German election monitors on OSCE election monitoring missions in 2019, 170 were women. That corresponds to around 40%. On five of the 19 missions, more women than men were deployed for election monitoring.
Gender equality at the Federal Foreign Office
Implementing gender equality at the Federal Foreign Office ...

As recently as the 1980s, if a woman shone on the diplomatic stage, it was often not by representing Germany abroad as an ambassador or by conducting political discussions. Rather, the only role available to women was mostly that of a diplomat’s wife: organising receptions, entertaining guests and volunteering for social causes.

Since 1914, women have gradually made inroads into the Federal Foreign Office – albeit, at first “merely” as stenographers, clerks, registrars, secretaries, interpreters and proofreaders at the Berlin headquarters. For many years, women were excluded from the diplomatic corps itself. “The ideal diplomat should be impartial, imperturbable and a trifle inhuman. These are not feminine qualities, they are male qualities.” This tenet professed by British diplomat Harold Nicolson dated from the 1920s, but was stubbornly persistent.

Not until 1950, seventy years ago, was the first woman admitted to the higher service at the Federal Foreign Office: Helen Bourbon. Over the following thirty years, from 1950 to 1980, only two women on average were admitted to the higher service per year. Among them were many remarkable individuals who managed to assert themselves in a male-dominated environment. Ellinor von Puttkamer was the first woman appointed a West German ambassador in 1969; her male supervisor attributed to her, somewhat smugly, a “thoroughly male intellect” (the Foreign Ministry of the GDR had much earlier appointed Aenne Kundermann as its first woman ambassador to Sofia in 1950). Upon assuming her ambassadorship in Yerevan in 1996, Carola
Müller-Holtkemper, the youngest woman ambassador appointed in the history of the Federal Republic at age 40, was disillusioned to discover that the image of the emancipated Soviet woman was not borne out by the social reality in Armenia. Helga Gräfin Strachwitz, who as Ambassador to Yemen in the 1990s visited the remotest parts of the country, where she chewed qat and smoked water pipes with tribal elders in order to push through her concerns, proved that women are taken seriously even in profoundly conservative environments. She and many others played their parts in effectively debunking long-standing prejudices against women diplomats. Nevertheless, for years to come society continued to view foreign policy as a “male domain” and visualised diplomats as greying men in pinstripe suits.

Today, we take for granted that women clearly belong in the foreign service. Not only do they comprise half of the workforce, they hold high-level posts. By now, the Federal Foreign Office is represented by 26 women ambassadors, 16 women consuls general and two women consuls; among their ranks are the ambassadors to Ottawa, Tel Aviv, Tokyo and Washington, D.C. Today, no one doubts that women can have a successful impact even in countries with a traditional mindset.

Diplomats choose a life-long rotation and agree to be reassignable anywhere in the world. They do not only work in the headquarters in Berlin or Bonn, but are generally deployed for three- or four-year terms at one of the 227 missions abroad. That might be, for example, the embassy in Hanoi, the Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York, or the consulate general in Rio de Janeiro, but it could also be a mission abroad in a crisis zone: in the Sahel, in Baghdad or in Kabul.

However, even in 2020, it is still more socially acceptable for a woman to accompany her male partner on a posting abroad than the other way around. Among the potential applicants who can envision a career with the Federal Foreign Office, women are especially concerned about the effects of frequent moves on their partners and children and whether career and family could be reconciled with such a vocation altogether.

The Federal Foreign Office has clear ambitions: the workforce should represent Germany’s diversifying society abroad. In keeping with that approach, half of leadership posts at missions abroad should naturally be held by women. Currently, the Federal Foreign Office is quite a distance away from achieving that goal with 19% women in senior positions abroad and 35% domestically; however, the Foreign Office has set firm targets along the road to that objective.
For one thing, parity is already achievable among today’s new hires. In 2019, slightly more than 50% of new employees for the higher service, the entry-level career path for most of senior positions, were women. The Federal Foreign Office has a diverse range of measures in place to support young women employees, such as leadership and communication seminars at our in-house further training centre that specifically target women employees. In addition, there are general coaching and mentorship programmes. To the greatest extent possible, the Federal Foreign Office supports the individual plans and desires of the women under its employ: some women employees and their partners can only envisage themselves living abroad together with their families, while others prefer to commute. Some employees would be interested in a senior position, but, due to their childcare or other caregiving responsibilities, could only hold one if the working conditions were flexible. The Federal Foreign Office is striving to enable such flexibility through innovative solutions such as job sharing, even in senior positions, as with the leadership of the Montreal Consulate General and the deputy leadership of the Embassy in Stockholm. The aim is to account for the employees’ varied expectations and desires in the best possible way.
Since late July 2017, the Consulate General in Montreal has been the first German mission abroad whose leadership follows a job-sharing model. Dr. Markus Lang and Dr. Kathrin Misera-Lang, a married couple, alternate every six months in the role of Consul General, which allows them to better reconcile their professional lives with their family lives as parents of three children. In Canada, this model has been greeted very positively and with great interest.

Of course, this includes seeking individualised solutions for working hours. With part-time options and location-flexible work, we see to it that our employees are not forced to choose between career and family, but can reconcile the two. Accordingly, we strive for a working culture that focuses more on goal achievement. That means a change in the roles of supervisors and employees in a team. Within the framework of team agreements made in advance, employees work more independently; as managers, they moderate and guide the balance of interests and are accountable for the results. Our in-house Leadership Competency Centre supports supervisors in refining their management and communication skills, especially with a view to new, flexible ways of working and the challenges of remote management.

At the same time, we support our employees with childcare, for example by assuming the costs of placement services, providing support with emergency care and subsidising the costs of care during further training. Currently, 70 children attend our affiliated day care centre in the direct vicinity of the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin.

All these changes are closely associated with the expansion of our female workforce and most of them were spearheaded by women. Ultimately, though, they benefit all employees, women and men alike. A growing share of our male colleagues use the opportunity of parental
leave, the ability to work part-time and/or from home or the option of a leave of absence to care for family members. This includes men in senior positions. For example, two male colleagues jointly supervise the Division of Real Estate Management Abroad, exemplifying a new notion of leadership. This cultural shift benefits everyone.

However, because we are not yet satisfied by all the above, in the summer of 2019 the Federal Foreign Office established a new unit responsible for equal opportunity and gender equity. Its task is to find new ways to anchor gender equality and gender equity for the long term.

What are we aiming at?

With new hires, we seek a balanced gender ratio. Women already comprise around half of all employees at the Federal Foreign Office. However, those women are distributed very unevenly across the different career paths. In the higher service, from which our ambassadors are recruited, the share of women among new hires was only 20% on average in the 1980s and 1990s. For new hires in the higher service, the gender gap has progressively narrowed. In 2019, for the second time since the first attaché(e) course was introduced in 1955, the share of women was more than 50%. To attain gender parity among new hires, especially in the higher service, we expressly encourage women to apply to the Federal Foreign Office on recruiting days, at job fairs and during presentations at universities. In addition, we continuously analyse our selection procedures to identify and root out any instances of gender discrimination.
Another priority is attaining gender parity among senior positions. The low share of women among new hires in the higher service in earlier years is reflected among senior positions today. Yet, even when accounting for their – already low – share of the relevant age cohort, women remain under-represented in senior positions at the Federal Foreign Office. Our purpose, therefore, is to raise the share of women in senior positions systematically. The personnel divisions are actively striving to achieve this, in particular through targeted human resources development, but also through further training and coaching and by directly reaching out to suitable women colleagues. The next target: by 30 June 2021, 40% of senior positions are to be held by women.

We want to further raise awareness of gender equality among managers and staff. To that end, we have begun working with the instructors of our further training courses to contemplate how the seminars can take into account gender equality and diversity from start to finish. In our management and communication seminars, especially, we aim to integrate a perspective of gender equality and diversity. The goal is to sensitise participants to implicit biases and to guide them to reflecting critically on their own behaviour, assumptions and alleged “truths”.

To underscore the importance of gender equality at the Federal Foreign Office, we will not only be observing International Women’s Day with an event at the headquarters in Berlin, but are encouraging our missions abroad at 227 locations worldwide to set examples in their host countries on International Women’s Day.

Giving public visibility to gender equality...

As a multiplier, the Federal Foreign Office works to ensure the visibility of our efforts for gender equity – at international conferences, during visits by the Foreign Minister and in social media.

What are we doing?

- When Foreign Minister Maas travels, the delegation accompanying him is as gender-balanced as possible. Particularly in crisis zones, gender equality is a fixture of programme planning.

- Ministers of State Michelle Müntefering, Niels Annen and Michael Roth have taken a clear stand: they only participate in public events and panel discussions if women are suitably involved and represented on stage. Michelle Müntefering is especially passionate about international networks of women and initiatives such as the African Women Leaders Network. For some years already, Michael
Roth has been a member of #JamaisSansElles, a French campaign to improve gender equity in Europe. At the opening event of the Federal Foreign Office’s 150th anniversary, Niels Annen called for us to adapt our own internal culture to the twenty-first century according to the slogan “feminism, not patriarchy”.

On International Women’s Day in 2019, the German Embassy in Ankara brought together journalists and representatives of non-governmen-tal organisations (NGO) for a “speed-dating” event. The NGOs had an opportunity to summarise their work and their impact in mini-conversations with the journalists to help publicise their activities and build public awareness.
In the summer of 2018, 12 female Federal Foreign Office employees launched the association frauen@diplo (women@diplo) because the Federal Foreign Office needs more women positioned as role models – both seasoned hands in the service and young colleagues – across all career tracks. This requires a truly forceful effort to demonstrate the importance of equity between men and women in the foreign service, to encourage and demand gender equality. That means questioning systems that tend to make it more difficult for women to envision a life in the foreign service, to pursue such a life or to complete a successful and satisfying career in our ranks.

By now, frauen@diplo is a registered association of approximately 150 members who seek to encourage German foreign policy with their commitment and their personal dedication to continuously and visibly champion gender equity – through policy, personnel and projects – around the world and demand gender equality in the Federal Foreign Office.

Regarding the special challenges for women diplomats and specific foreign-policy questions, the members liaise with partner organisations in other foreign ministries, such as those of France and the United Kingdom. For the Federal Foreign Office itself, the association’s goal is to achieve parity and, above all, to see more women in senior positions, achieve gender equity and work towards non-discrimination between women and men. That includes discussing issues such as the compatibility of family and career and how to approach rotations during specific stages of a person’s life and career.

In addition, frauen@diplo works to strengthen women’s networks and to embolden women to take on senior responsibility. The targeted cultivating of decision-makers serves in no small part to sensitise leadership staff to gender equality issues. Furthermore, the association enhanced dialogue among female staff, both at headquarters and in the missions abroad. To that end, the association regularly holds practically oriented discussion events and round tables.

frauen@diplo invites the involvement in the association of all Federal Foreign Office employees, female and male, who want to champion the unrestricted realisation of the equality principle of Article 3 (1) of the Basic Law and especially the promotion obligation set out in Article 3 (2) sentence 2. Men are expressly welcome in the association as allies!
“Feminist foreign policy means policy-making for the whole of society, including internationally. This is a question of democracy. We need to recognise that peace and human rights can only be achieved when women are equal. At the negotiation table as well.”  

Minister of State Müntefering

In their own offices, the Federal Foreign Office’s entire leadership is especially concerned with the compatibility of family and career and gender-balanced staffing. Internationally, they champion the consistent implementation and advancement of Resolution 1325; on official trips abroad, they seek out dialogue with women from the domains of politics, culture and civil society.
“I was glad to join the initiative #JamaisSansElles. We make the commitment only to participate in events if women are suitably represented. In the year 2020, this should be a matter of course, but unfortunately that is still far from being the case. When women are involved, everyone benefits!”

Minister of State Roth

“Feminist foreign policy presents us with inward-facing and outward-facing obligations. It needs to become a matter of course for women to be equally represented and involved in decision processes. Only then is our engagement for the implementation and advancement of Resolution 1325 – one of our priorities on the UN Security Council – truly credible.”

Minister of State Annen
Our missions abroad also conduct a diverse range of campaigns to add to the issue’s visibility in their respective host countries.

“Para mí, la igualdad de género significa que no hayan techos de cristal, solo puertas abiertas”

Sabine Bloch, Embajadora de Alemania en la República Dominicana.

International Women’s Day campaign by the German Embassy in Santo Domingo

“For me, gender equality means that there are no glass ceilings, but instead open doors.”

Sabine Bloch, the then-Ambassador to the Dominican Republic

In the Federal Foreign Office’s public communications, attention is paid to representing gender equity through both language (using gender-conscious language) and content. In our own products, we endeavour to present a balanced ratio of men and women as examples. Additionally, in terms of content, the Federal Foreign Office communicates about the themes of gender equity, ranging from our advocacy on the Security Council regarding human rights projects for women to international days of action such as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.
The Federal Foreign Office on social media

During the public dialogues held throughout Germany (Diplomats in Dialogue) and at “Open Situation Rooms”, we pay particular attention to the equal involvement of female and male diplomats. At the citizens’ workshop with 100 citizens, a balanced ratio is ensured among both participants and moderators.
At the Citizens’ Workshop in November 2019, the participants discussed how Germany can contribute even more effectively to the equal participation of women and men at all levels and stages of peace processes.

What are we aiming at?

The Federal Foreign Office wants to raise the public profile of women experts on issues of foreign and security policy. To that end, we are supporting the development of a publicly accessible database called the WoX network. This will reduce the prevalence of largely male panels and conferences.

When project partners organise conferences on behalf of the Federal Foreign Office, they are contractually obligated to adhere to a target quota of at least 30% women among panels and participants. For conferences organised by the Federal Foreign Office itself, we strive for a share of at least 40% women panellists, moderators and participants. So-called “manels” (all-male panels) and all-female “fanels” – frequently observed discussing so-called “women’s issues” – are likewise eschewed.
The impetus was an arms control conference at the Federal Foreign Office with nearly all male experts and participants. Women experts in foreign and security policy are often quite simply less well-known than their male counterparts, and thus less likely to be invited to conferences: a vicious cycle. To address this, the Federal Foreign Office is financially supporting a publicly accessible database of women who are experts in these areas as well as in disarmament and arms control.

When employees of the Federal Foreign Office are invited to conferences, we solicit information in advance about the gender composition of panels and participants. This way, the Federal Foreign Office contributes to raising awareness of the issue.
Outlook
The rights of women and girls are an inalienable, integral and indivisible component of universal human rights. The equal participation of women is a basic prerequisite for the functioning of a free society. Today, we must sadly observe that women’s rights are still not a matter of course. Even worse, we are increasingly struggling with a situation in which there is no longer an international consensus on women’s rights. More and more, we are spending our time defending the status quo instead of advancing women’s rights to the next level. We are now running to stay in the same place.

We also ask ourselves how we can do even more here at the Federal Foreign Office. Despite all the progress made since our founding 150 years ago, the status quo remains complex. This is compounded by global foreign rotations that offer unique opportunities but also come with particular challenges. This is reflected in the Gender Equality Index, which represents the equality of women and men at top-level federal authorities.

The objective is clear: it is a matter of credibility that gender equality be treated as a priority not only in German foreign policy, but also in the Federal Foreign Office itself. The idea is that gender equality also yields a more diverse and more innovative German foreign policy. By this, we mean not only that German foreign policy is to be made with and by more women, but also that foreign policy must continually evolve.

The year 2020, with its important anniversaries, is very significant. Our response to it is not business as usual, but constant revising of our mindset and the motivation for change. Political debates thrive when different perspectives are considered and when all voices are heeded attentively. Only then can the Federal Foreign Office continue to rise to the growing demands that Germany faces on the international stage.