



WOMEN DELIVER CONFERENCE 2023 BEGINS WITH URGENT CALL TO DOUBLE DOWN ON FEMINIST EFFORTS

Spaces, Solidarity, Solutions: WD2023 a hopeful moment for gender equality, even in the face of escalating global crises

KIGALI, RWANDA - July 17, 2023 - Today, the Women Deliver Conference 2023 (WD2023) commenced in Kigali, Rwanda, uniting over 6,000 people from diverse backgrounds and fields of expertise worldwide to advance gender equality. Women Deliver is a leading global advocate that champions gender equality and the sexual and reproductive health and rights of girls and women everywhere.

At an opening press conference, Dr. Maliha Khan, President and CEO of Women Deliver, said, "We're facing enormous headwinds against gender equality, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, and a growing anti-rights movement worldwide. The only way we can push past them is if we double down on our efforts and work together. The time has come for us to unite against the global rollback of rights – change is inevitable, progress is not. We have to work at it."

Emphasizing the significance of free and open democracies for the progress Women Deliver seeks, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Chair of the Women Deliver Board and former Deputy President of South Africa, expressed, "Women Deliver underscores the vital role of democratic systems in advancing gender equality. Open democracies foster an enabling environment for women's political participation, policy and law shaping, as well as the protection of women's rights and the creation of equal opportunities. They facilitate improved access to education and healthcare for girls and women while establishing effective mechanisms to combat gender-based violence."

WD2023 has been co-created from its inception through the input of thousands of public insights via community consultation and an Advisory Group comprising 60+ representatives from all sectors, with 60% of participants representing feminist and gender equality organizations and entities in the Global South.

WD2023 is themed Spaces, Solidarity, and Solutions. "Each delegate and speaker has converged here with a collective purpose: to identify and act upon evidence-based solutions," said Maliha. "This week centers on creating empowering spaces for the feminist movement, holding leaders accountable, and creating a groundswell of voices for gender equality. This groundswell of collective action is critical to urge political leaders to act."



The WD2023 program comprises 10 plenaries, 75 concurrent sessions, 12 skills-building workshops, 11 pre-conferences, 200 side events, 240 exhibition spaces, 55 Global Dialogue events, and nine Regional Convening Partner events.

The Plenary stage will bring together the most powerful voices within the feminist community – from heads of state to grassroots activists and youth. They share the WD2023 stage to inspire, drive dialogue, and mobilize the collective into action to achieve true equality, rights and dignity for girls and women everywhere.

The [plenaries](#) will cover:

- Gender equality in the era of multiple crises
- The state of gender equality in the African region
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Accountability of gender equality commitments
- Feminist policies
- Countering global anti-rights movements
- Decolonization
- Movement building
- Sustaining feminist movements

[Speakers](#) and panelists, among many others, include:

- Dr. Sima Bahous, ED, UN Women
- Helen Clark, Women Deliver Board Member and former Prime Minister of New Zealand
- Leymah Gbowee, Liberian Activist and Nobel Peace Laureate
- Dr. Natalia Kanem, ED, UNFPA
- Tawakkol Karman, Nobel Laureate, journalist, politician, and human rights activist
- H.E. Graça Machel, Former First Lady of South Africa
- Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Former Deputy President of South Africa
- Thelma (Theo) Mubanga, Women's Alliance for Equality (WafE)
- Mamta Murthi, World Bank VP for Human Development
- Mary Robinson, Chair of the Elders and former President of Ireland
- Minister Harjit Sajjan, Minister of International Development of Canada
- Malala Yousafzai, Activist and Nobel Peace Laureate
- Anita Zaidi, President of the Gender Equality Division, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation



- Tarcila Rivera Zea, Indigenous activist, CHIRAPAQ Centre for Indigenous Cultures of Peru

"This week let's be clear-eyed about what we need to do, but also celebrate our hard-fought wins. And we must remain hopeful, since hope is the impetus for change. Let's come together and fight for the future we deserve – the future all girls and women around the world deserve," said Maliha.

To learn more about Women Deliver and to tune in to the virtual conference from anywhere in the world, register by visiting wd2023.org. Follow the conversation on social media using #WD2023.

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