

The Honourable Mélanie Joly, PC, MP
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

February 18, 2025

Open Letter to Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs: Continuation of the Women, Peace and Security Ambassador's Office

Dear Minister Joly,

We write to you as members of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) community, including the Women, Peace and Security Network – Canada (WPSN-C), to urge the Government of Canada to prioritize the continuation of the WPS Ambassador's Office and appoint a new ambassador as soon as possible following the completion of Ambassador Jacqueline O'Neill's term.

Since its establishment, the WPS Ambassador's Office has been an effective mechanism in supporting policy coherence, contributing to Canada's leadership on WPS, and reinforcing our international commitments. The Ambassador and her Office have worked tirelessly to support Canada's implementation of the WPS agenda—both domestically and globally. The Office also plays a key role in bridging civil society and government, strengthening inclusive policymaking.

As we approach the end of Ambassador O'Neill's term, we urge you to take immediate steps to ensure the Office remains a permanent fixture within Global Affairs Canada. Eliminating or weakening this role would signal a significant step backward, undermining Canada's credibility and commitments to WPS at a time when global security and gender equality are increasingly at risk.

To safeguard Canada's leadership in WPS, we ask that you:

1. Publicly confirm that the WPS Ambassador's Office will continue beyond the current term, ensuring its institutionalization within Global Affairs Canada.
2. To maintain momentum and facilitate a smooth transition, prioritize the timely appointment of a strong WPS champion with a track record of meaningful engagement with and support for civil society as the next Ambassador.
3. Ensure the Office maintains the resources and authority necessary to advance Canada's WPS commitments across government and in international diplomacy.

We also take this opportunity to recognize and thank Ambassador O'Neill for her exceptional leadership as Canada's first WPS Ambassador. Her dedication to advancing the WPS agenda, her commitment to engaging civil society, and her tireless efforts to strengthen Canada's implementation of the WPS agenda have set a high standard for this position. Her contributions have been invaluable, and it is essential that this work continues with a strong and sustained mandate.

Minister Joly, Canada has played an important role in advancing the WPS agenda on the global stage. To uphold this reputation and advance the commitments made under Canada's National Action Plan and multilateral frameworks, the WPS Ambassador's Office must remain a priority.

We look forward to your leadership in ensuring the continuity and strengthening of this critical role.

Sincerely,

Organizations

Afghanistan Women Foundation
BC Council for International Cooperation
Canada for Africa Group
Canadian Coalition for Youth, Peace & Security (CCYPS)
Canadian Peace Initiative (CPI)
Canadian Voice of Women for Peace
Egale Canada
Equality Fund
Federation of Medical Women of Canada (FMWC)
Inter Pares
International Women's Rights Project
Mennonite Central Committee Canada
Mines Action Canada
Peace Track Initiative
Sudanese Women Rights Action
WILPF - Canada
Women Veteran Research and Engagement Network

Individuals (Organizations listed for identification purposes only)

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Katrina Leclerc (Saint-Paul University)
Ketty Nivyabandi (Amnesty International Canada (English))
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Sophia Papastavrou, PhD
Veena Verma

This open letter was coordinated by members of the Women, Peace and Security Network-Canada (WPSN-C). However, it does not represent the views of all members. WPSN-C members and allies who support the content of this letter have signed on in their individual or organizational capacities.

CC: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
Her Excellency Jacqueline O'Neill, Canada's Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security