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IFLRY Position Paper on Gender Equality

Defining Gender Equality

Regardless of the political position of IFLRY, Gender Equality as a concept should be defined before any considerations and opinions can be formed. The multifaceted dynamics of gendered power around the world imply a need for continuous change in the goals and the strategies.

As we attempt to position IFLRY within the political system, it should hence be clear that a political goal towards abolishing gender inequality is inherently hard to be fixed, and concepts of transformation such as putting new standards for both men and women are insufficient. Strategies toward this goals should be flexible, adapting their approach toward gender inequality as a moving target (Verloo, 2005).

Awareness of this changing nature of both the definition of gender equality as well as its strategies and goals is therefore a crucial first step.

Although in many conservative approaches to gender equality there is only a focus on the relation and power balance between men and women, and the genderedness of systems and processes in general, IFLRY wants to address the equality of any possible gender identity one may have. The simple distinction between men and women is does not fully represent today's world. IFLRY supports individuals in identifying their own gender, which people may define themselves, or in the same sense the un-necessity of having these labels in the first place. IFLRY wants to take a leading role in the road towards a world "beyond" gender.

This will also mean the collapse of the contemporary system of sexual orientations (including the bisexual-polysexual-pansexual, queer, asexual and also heterosexual spectra), as these reflect one's gender and the gender of those one loves, but should never define opportunities or choices.

IFLRY's view on gender equality should be central to the liberal ideology, as it is indispensable in order for all individuals to enjoy the right to equal possibilities and a prosperous future. This Position Paper is only "snapshot" of how we view the concept now, and this paper requires revisiting every few years. In this changing world gender equality as seen as both a strategy and a goal, should be intertwined in any other policy and process in order to be successful.

Liberal strategies to fight gender inequality



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Gender mainstreaming is therefore an essential tool to integrate gender awareness into any process of policy. Gender mainstreaming as conceptualized by the Council of Europe (1998) includes “the (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy making.” This forms a central role in IFLRY’s approach to gender equality. The strategies IFLRY uses in the fight against gender inequality are therefore:

Integrate gender mainstreaming in all policies at all levels

Gender approaches can not be seen as an isolated issue, but instead is relevant to any type of policy (from transport, to housing, to climate change) and should therefore be integrated in all these policies. Gender equality does not begin or end at a country’s border or a city’s outskirts, and policy should therefore be “genderproof” on all geographical scales, from local to international.

Weakening of gender systems in all societies around the world

Gender systems as a term is used in conjunction with concepts such as gender order and gender power order to describe the structures and processes that generate and uphold gender inequality in society. Gender systems are based on two principles: the separation of the genders and male superiority. These assumptions are viewed as inherently wrong, and systems that uphold this should be weakened or in the future dismantled, in order for individuals to be equal. The gender equality work aims to break this pattern, and when this has been accomplished, we will have a gender equal society.

Protect Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights for all gender identities and ensure national embeddedness of these rights

SRHR include sexual rights, sexual health rights, reproductive rights and reproductive health rights. These rights therefore protect one’s sexual freedom, thus freedom of choice in sexuality and reproduction (and thus including gender transition, abortion, surrogacy and adoption), and protects individuals against harm in any form including sexual harassment and rape, domestic violence, genital mutilation and forced marriages. Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights should be protected for anyone under any circumstances, meaning to any individual regardless of their gender identity and sexual orientation. Family policies should also be adapted to this, as these policies often do not reflect the changing family structures in today’s world, opening up possibilities for all. Problems with SRHR are still existing as many countries have not embedded



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these rights in their national policies. This lack of national embeddedness should diminish over the coming years.

Ensure equality of economic opportunity for all gender identities

Economic equality does not only include the gender pay gap, which is one of the more visible problems in many countries. Gender inequality is however problematic in many other fields such as parents' allowance, distribution of shared parental leave, pensions and right to daycare (or nursery). All these aspects should be universally even for all in the future in order to accomplish gender equality in the workplace.

Provide gender stereotype free education for all, on every level of education.

Give all the children access to everything possible without stereotypes. The education and training of teachers should provide them with the skills to teach children with different backgrounds equally and free from gender stereotypes. This means that all education, from kindergarten and primary school to the highest education in university, should be free from heteronormative stereotypes. Education should reflect the society and thus teach about equality of all gender identities and all sexual preferences, and include all possible forms a family may have.

View prostitution as a livelihood-strategy and protect freedom of choice

Prostitution should be legalized in order to regulate and protect those who work in this sector. Too often human trafficking and forced prostitution go undetected as governments are unaware of what happens in this informal sector. Anyone who wants to sell sex should have the freedom to do so, but should also have the same protection to work in a safe environment as any other profession. Criminalization of prostitution does not solve the issues, nor does it abolish the profession, it only hides the problems from society's sight.

Only use affirmative action policies until they become irrelevant and unnecessary

Affirmative action is the policy of favoring members of a disadvantaged or vulnerable group who suffer from discrimination within a society or culture. This method is criticized for being illiberal, however has also proven to, in some cases, be a way to increase gender equality. These policies should however only be used as long as it is necessary.

Adopting these 7 principles on a global scale would effectively cause change towards a gender equal world. IFLRY actively encourages its member organizations to adopt these strategies and principles. As a global youth platform, IFLRY has the opportunity to impact policy on an



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international level, and therefore takes a leading role in working towards a world beyond gender for future generations.