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## Joint Statement of Civil society 7, Labour 7, Pride 7, Women 7 ahead of the G7 Development Minister

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G7 Development Ministers will meet under the French Presidency at a time of heightened geopolitical tensions, rising poverty and inequality, accelerating climate change, and a severe crisis in development cooperation. Without immediate action, the first G7 ministerial meeting on development risks becoming a historic failure marked by the absence of any commitments tackling inequality, including gender disparities, and addressing the climate and energy crisis.

The G7 must not be caught off guard; it must act decisively in the face of escalating conflicts, a weakening multilateral system, deepening climate and humanitarian crises, and increasing attacks on fundamental rights and increasing discrimination on the basis of race, gender, migration status, sexual orientations, gender identity, and disability.

The situation is worsened by unprecedented cuts to official development assistance (ODA) and the growing disengagement of certain states from their responsibilities and commitments. The OECD has just announced that ODA has decreased for the second year in a row with a 23%<sup>1</sup> decline compared to 2024. At a time when military spending is rising, cuts to ODA are putting lives at risk and weakening partner countries' ability to plan and deliver sustainable development policies, a trend that is also severely affecting the United Nations system, particularly its human rights bodies.

The upcoming G7 Development Ministers' meeting in Paris on April 29–30 is expected to address development governance, effectiveness and concentration; however, this agenda risks missing key structural issues. Civil society, gathered through the C7, P7, W7 and trade unions, through the L7, highlight the following major blind spots in this ministerial track: the weakening of public development finance, the failure to recognize the creation of decent jobs and respect for labour rights, the absence of a cross-cutting gender lens, and the absence of climate ambition each of them central to addressing global imbalances.

ODA remains one of the rare sources of stable, predictable, and transparent development funding providing a critical safety net for those most at risk. Yet an elephant remains in the room that no one is willing to address: most G7 countries are dramatically cutting their ODA budgets and are refusing to reverse the trend, despite their collective commitment to increasing ODA volumes. Moreover, as aid budgets decline, the shift toward a transactional approach coincides with a growing focus on mobilizing

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<sup>1</sup> Together, the five largest DAC donors alone account for 96% of this decrease: the United States (-57%), Germany (-17%), France (-11%), the United Kingdom (-11%), and Japan (-6%) : <https://www.oecd.org/en/about/news/press-releases/2026/04/international-aid-fell-sharply-in-2025-says-oecd.html>

private finance, as well as a weakening of corporate accountability and Responsible Business Conduct instruments and standards.

Both trends are misaligned with the real needs of populations: guaranteeing respect for fundamental human and labor rights, access to social protection, health and education, a living wage and the creation of green and decent jobs through a just transition. Nor do they allow for the strengthening of social cohesion and civic space, or the guarantee of freedom of expression and freedom of association, which are essential pillars of any democracy.

Addressing climate change, reducing poverty, including in-work poverty, and meeting humanitarian needs require structural changes in the international financial architecture to cancel debt burdens that prevent development in many Global South countries, ensure policy coherence, and provide public grant-based financing that does not generate debt, relying in particular on fair and progressive taxation for sustainable domestic resource mobilization.

Failing to integrate gender equality structurally sends a dangerous signal amid a global backlash against women's, girls', and LGBTQIA+ rights. This runs counter obligations under CEDAW and to commitments made by several states, including France through its feminist foreign policy, to place gender equality at the highest level in international summits and to consistently promote it in their foreign policies. At the same time, drastic budget cuts combined with anti-rights restrictions on some foreign assistance funds, are reducing funding dedicated to gender equality and to feminist and LGBTQIA+ organizations, even as needs are increasing. Rights rollbacks are central to eroding democracy, shrinking civic space, and rising authoritarianism. Civil society, unions, and youth, feminist and LGBTQIA+ organizations play a vital role in defending rights, promoting social cohesion, and building resilience, despite chronic attacks.

The lack of focus on sustainable development and climate finance is equally alarming. The countries least responsible for global emissions are already facing disproportionate consequences, undermining their food systems, economies, and resilience. Without a significant increase in public, concessional grant-based financing and mechanisms that lower the cost of capital and advance a just transition, climate targets will remain unattainable. G7 countries, as the largest historical emitters, carry a climate debt toward these nations. Climate finance must therefore not be framed as aid to the poorest, but as the repayment of a longstanding debt owed to those who are suffering the consequences of a crisis they did not create. Yet many G7 members have still not fulfilled their existing commitments, nor have they clearly pledged their post-2025 climate finance targets. This lack of accountability raises serious concerns about political will.

The C7, L7, P7 and W7 urge G7 development ministers to take urgent and decisive action.

First, fully commit to reforming the global financial architecture, increase ODA while reforming it, prioritizing those most in need, including least-developed countries, ensure decent work and fund essential services. Public funding is not merely one tool among others, but the essential prerequisite for ensuring universal, accessible, and high-quality public services, particularly in education, health care, and social protection. At a time when the logic of privatization, outsourcing, automation, AI-assisted services, and "profit at any cost" is gaining traction, it is crucial to reaffirm the central role of governments and public investment as pillars of social cohesion and sustainable development.

Alongside this, acknowledging the backlash against the rights of women, girls and LGBTQIA+ as a major political challenge is required, together with mitigating any harms imposed by anti-rights restrictions and providing targeted support to feminist and civil society organizations as well as implementing the gender-related commitments made by several G7 countries, including at the latest Ministerial Conference on Feminist Foreign Policies held in Paris in October 2025<sup>2</sup>.

Finally, full responsibility for climate action must be taken by G7 members by significantly scaling up public grant-based finance, regulating private sector involvement to ensure responsible business practices in line with the UN Guiding Principles and the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises, implementing mandatory human and environmental rights due diligence, and ensuring that funding reaches the most vulnerable populations. Acknowledging and addressing climate debt must be at the core of this effort.

As the ministerial date approaches, civil society and unions urge governments, especially France as host, to demonstrate leadership by reaffirming commitments to peace, multilateralism, human rights, gender equality, climate justice, strong systems of social protection and the defence of workers' rights, and by advancing ambitious public policies grounded in social justice. Without this commitment, the proposed priorities risk remaining disconnected from reality and unable to address the growing inequalities in the world.

In this context, France's G7 Presidency must be a moment of important political clarity: between states that are contributing to a backlash against rights, those that are turning a blind eye, and those that are actively fighting to uphold them. This reality calls for clear and coherent political choices.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://uk.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/31-states-adopt-political-declaration-defend-womens-and-girls-rights-and-gender-equality>