



*This is a partial synthesis of the **World March of Women's** views on the international context, drafted as an input for the preparations for its upcoming **International Meeting**, to be held **October 29-30-31, 2021**. More detailed regional aspects will be added later, based on the preparation processes conducted in each region.*

A brief characterization of the current context

The international context is marked by a conservative and neoliberal offensive against life, territories, and labor. In recent years, most countries have witnessed the imposition of austerity measures that dismantle and hinder redistributive and welfare policies, strengthening the power of the market over all realms of life. This neoliberal offensive attacks even liberal democracies, strengthens authoritarianisms and conservatism, and intensifies the control over the peoples, particularly women, Black people, Indigenous peoples, and migrants in general.

The far right uses the deconstitution of politics as a tool to leverage its growth amid a crisis of centrist and/or right-wing parties. A recurrent topic is the rants attacking corruption, which have resulted, in many places, in the election of figures who are deemed “anti-political,” who adopt nationalist and conservative rhetorics while effectively developing absolutely neoliberal policies. There has been an aggravation of fascism and racism, as well as of the control over women's sexuality and bodies and the criminalization of gender non-conforming bodies. There have been attacks and coups against governments that were implementing more distributive projects; hybrid wars have escalated; and the offensive of economic blockades, such as the ones imposed against Venezuela and Cuba, has become stronger.

Transnational corporations and the financial system, where the power of the bourgeoisie is concentrated, are the ones getting the most out of this model. Large economic groups accumulate all the profit that is generated, from the extraction of raw materials to the production and distribution of goods and services. Corporate power controls the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and, increasingly, the United Nations, and has many instruments to make states and their resources operate in the service of profit rather than of peoples' lives. Free trade and investment agreements and “aid” packages that force states into debt and condition their policies are prime examples of this.

This dynamic of the capitalist system pursues answers to the continual exhaustion of neoliberalism and the loss of profit rates. Capital advances violently over territories, thrusting more parts of nature into the financialization circuit. There is strong investment by corporate capital based on the acquisition of debt, which increases while delaying its recovery in the financial market. This produces a speculative stock market, which causes instability and weakness in dependent economies as a result of the so-called volatile capital. Increasing debt in countries in the south puts them in an extremely difficult situation. In Africa, adding to this is the fight against terrorism, such as in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Mozambique. All dependent economies struggle with the impact of this volatility, which, in current times, happens amid the emergence of a new geography in the industry. Productivity increases with massive low-wage labor and the development of high technology. Asian countries such as China, Thailand, the Philippines, and Bangladesh experience disasters caused in their workshops, such as the collapse of the Rana Plaza building on April 24th, 2013, where hundreds of workers died. Part of this dynamic includes important changes in geopolitics identified as the US-China competition, which must also be seen from the perspective of the economic strengthening of the so-called Eurasia Group.

Technology and internet companies are the ones getting increasingly rich with the data produced by people in their everyday lives, whether when they are connected to their phones or social media, whether when they are in cities full of sensors and surveillance cameras or in rural areas that are mapped by agribusiness companies, which are going digital with their forms of control with the so-called “agriculture 4.0.” Bayer-Monsanto continues to be a forerunner of this continuous attack on peasant production. Today, 80% of the data extracted, stored, and analyzed around the world is owned by five large companies that determine the surveillance, control, and precariousness of labor: Microsoft, Apple, Alphabet (Google), Amazon, and Facebook. These companies, in turn, significantly invest in other platform companies—applications.

The relationship between corporations and governments reveals the maintenance and updating of colonialism between the countries of the global north and south. We see the offensive taken by transnational corporations to destroy democracies, provoke political and social instability, and deepen poverty and authoritarianisms that go hand in hand with the authoritarianism of the market. To guarantee this dynamic, free trade and investment agreements modernize the colonial relationships of exploitation of territories.

These are relationships that work together to control beings and their ways of living in increasingly violent ways, based on agribusiness and agroindustry, pharmaceutical companies, new data technologies, and artificial intelligence. By controlling communications and marketing strategies, corporations appropriate the agenda of movements and usurp our language to cover up their death projects.

Their projects reach the territories not only under the name of transnational corporations, but also through NGOs aligned with the rhetoric of green capitalism and its logic of compensation and environmental preservation. The logic under which they operate is that the scarcer nature and the poorer the soils, the greater the value of the “green” bonds they trade in the financial market. But the battle over food sovereignty also becomes greater due to the offensive taken by agribusiness and the supermarket industry, encouraged by international organizations such as the UN. In the pandemic, we saw the conversation around healthy eating being appropriated by neoliberalism and its large chains, to the detriment and unappreciation of peasant and family agriculture. They replace people with machinery, and those who still

work in the countryside do so in informal, intermittent, and dangerous conditions, facing high health risks as they are exposed to pesticides.

There is a battle around the way we eat and it has been increasingly transformed by a logic that needs to be continuously more convenient, faster, and more processed. Agroecology is necessary as a pledge, practice, science, and movement of women and the peasant peoples. With agroecology, we pledge on different forms of knowledge, technologies, ways of living, and caring for each other that are established in a relationship of interdependence and ecodependence that is not ruled by the exploitation of capital.

Transnational corporations are also responsible for the increasing loss of biodiversity as they decide what species, varieties, or parts of plants have market value and will be used. Furthermore, monoculture makes it impossible to grow other crops on affected soils. In cities, there is a sweeping process of gentrification, which attacks even places where the right to housing was widely established, such as European countries.

In the clothing supply chain, for example, corporate brutality against life is patent, from the monocrops of cotton to the logistics corridors that dispossess the peoples and encroach indigenous and ancestral lands, to the precarious working conditions of department stores. Capitalist supply chains are chains of death and destruction, and this is not limited to the clothing industry.

In their view, feminism and the defense of nature become a way of purplewashing or greenwashing capitalism. Especially now, with the pandemic and global awareness of climate change, they are trying to sell false alternatives and solutions, all the while wanting to continue to make a profit.

The control, surveillance, precariousness, and devaluation of wages are the result of the attack on social protection. Companies take the opportunity to impose new ways of organizing labor: working from home, using the workers' own resources, widening the gaps in the access to necessary resources to work from home, and promoting unequal protection for those who cannot work from home, in addition to fostering the rhetoric of entrepreneurship as a false solution to financial autonomy.

To ensure the implementation of their policies, the right-wing increases militarization and tools of state control, expanding social surveillance, banning protests, criminalizing social movements, banning community actions, and strengthening police and military systems on borders, which results in the escalation of conflicts.

Racism and the criminalization of immigration have a strong impact on traditional peoples and communities, including Indigenous and Black populations, as well as migrant women. Multiple forms of violence are perpetrated against migrants and refugees, both those who manage to remain in the country they arrive and those who are deported. Many people are forced out of the country to which they migrated, and each deportation involves an abrupt separation from a family or community.

These many dimensions overlap when women's bodies are attacked, such as when there are restrictions to territories, the increase in violence and control, the imposition of norms and maximization of consumption, as well as the continuous enforcement of discipline that is always marked by class and race relations. As part of these control mechanisms, conservative values, many of which religious and patriarchal, are maintained and modernized all over the world. This new conservative wave controls women's freedom and autonomy and imposes on us the sole responsibility for domestic and care work, all the while dismantling public policies for social reproduction.

In the territories of Kurdistan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia, oppression against women and their peoples takes the form of apartheid and colonization, restriction of political and civil rights, forced displacement, and urban real estate speculation, such as the case in Lebanon after the Beirut explosion.

At the same time, there is another pillar holding up this control in what we call diversity neoliberalism, which is the intensification of neoliberal and individualistic values and the increase in hierarchy among women in terms of income and employment. This “individual empowerment” is yet another expression of purplewashing in neoliberalism.

Resisting the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic emerged amid this situation of profound attack on the peoples and the aggravation of the capital-life conflict. Mourning, control, and lockdown measures (although reaching different results in the north and the south) rapidly changed economic and social dynamics.

In the early days of the pandemic, many conversations emerged about topics and issues that used to be restricted to a few sectors, particularly social movements. Social inequality, violence against women, domestic and care work, the need for public health services and social protection policies, and the issue of food and racism became more visible.

The destructive character of capitalism was exposed by the impacts of the pandemic, expanding the conversation about the need to defend life and what is essential, and furthering the discussion on the problems of opposing the economy and the defense of life. This was not and still is not a minor issue, as businesses tirelessly pressured to end lockdown measures and to access state funds. Over and over again, we have heard the argument that the death toll of the pandemic was not enough reason to bring the economy to a halt, especially because most of those who die are older adults and because they were just “those who were supposed to die anyway.” This goes to show how cruel and dismissive of human life these arguments are, also adopting a hygienist and eugenic rhetoric.

As the pandemic spread across southern countries and poor populations, the situation became much more serious as the emergency policies implemented were insufficient, most people were unable to comply with lockdown measures, and particularly because there are poor conditions of health care infrastructure, water supply, and shortage in countries that depend on food imports.

The pandemic has increased the need for care work carried out by women at home, as well as for other kinds of work outside the home that also depend on women, and racialized women to a great extent. This is a result of the sexual and racial division of labor, in which women make up the majority in activities that could not be halted, such as health care and service workers, nurses, assistants, retail workers, etc. Women are the majority working in health care and facing the pandemic on a daily basis, with intense workdays and lack of safety equipment.

Continents are in turmoil and we have struggled with so many thousands of deaths, most of which in the USA, Brazil, and India—more than half a million people have died in each of these territories. At lower levels, other countries in Europe, Asia, and the Americas have had to endure the deaths of thousands of people in precarious and impoverished conditions, because their governments were unwilling or unable to implement appropriate sanitary measures to tackle this serious situation.

As different governments tackled the pandemic differently, this shows that this is not a natural catastrophe, but rather something that can only be addressed if people are provided effective conditions to have their needs met and depending on the way resources and actions are used to minimize and contain the pandemic. The disaster of denialist governments such as the Trump and the Bolsonaro administrations became evident. On the other hand, many governments in countries with little infrastructure to provide enough tests, treatment, and hospital beds implemented strict lockdown measures, including with the use of violence. This has happened and continues to happen in governments that take advantage of the situation to control the opposition that is confronting their neoliberal policies.

The pharmaceutical industry has profited and controlled the responses to the pandemic and the access to vaccines, which should be a right. They are transnational companies that have profited from the virus, the same way that Bayer-Monsanto has profited from the production of poisonous chemicals that make people ill, while also working on the production of medical solutions to provide the cure. The COVAX Facility initiative, which has the World Health Organization and corporate foundations as its members, has established itself as an organizer in the distribution of vaccines, medicines, and other supplies for diagnostic and containment measures for the pandemic. However, it is not the states that are playing the leading role in these decision-making processes, but the transnationals that favor their own interests to the detriment of the peoples' sovereignty.

This is what we identify as corporate capture of multilateral organizations. As long as access to vaccines is defined by economic capacity, there will be no right to health. There are countries, in the African continent for example, that have run up more debt to buy vaccines, which leads to more economic instability and more precarious living conditions. This is why patent breaking on the agenda of women and grassroots movements that demand the distribution of vaccines according to the needs of the people. Facing health as a right and not a business is what has enabled to carry out responses grounded in the peoples' sovereignty. Cuba, despite enduring decades of economic blockade by the US, has managed to develop and produce its own vaccine.

The pandemic has also been used as an excuse to increase the militarization of territories and the criminalization of social movements, to further open the doors to the power of transnational corporations and increasing debt, to attack democracies, and to expand the control of surveillance technologies over our lives, our territories, our work. It's a system that wants us to serve it silently, demobilized, and over-exploited. That's why we are attacked when we fight for our rights and self-determination. The militarization of territories also serves the hygienist rhetoric to violate and kill specific groups, and it allies with the rhetoric of the "war on drugs" and patriarchal and fundamentalist religious values that promote demonization and different expressions of racism and xenophobia against traditional peoples and communities, migrants, women, and children.

Through Feminism, Women Challenge Capital

There is a process of expansion of feminism around the world, both in terms of actions and mobilization, and in the presence and conversation on social media. This process is marked by the massive participation of youth and women from grassroots sectors. A first issue to highlight is the elaboration about how class relationships, heteropatriarchy, racism, and colonialism intertwine. These different elements, it should be noted, are not necessarily consistently expressed on political agendas and are often limited to rhetorical abstraction. There are also sectors that continue to pledge on segmented aspects, with sectoral or thematic demands.

Neoliberal thought has also occupied sectors of social and feminist movements, mainly centered around the rhetoric of individual empowerment, as we discussed earlier with "purplewashing," but which is also present in institutional discourse, following the dynamics and relationships with funding agencies that encourage movements to become NGOs, especially in the global north, while countries in the south face the strengthening of a missionary spirit through new forms of coloniality. This complex dynamic of relying on funds consequently generates the loss of autonomy for our movements.

In the sectors that make up grassroots feminism, of which the WMW is part, we can say that even with the new dynamics imposed by the pandemic, this feminism has mobilized against the onslaught of imperialism and against militarization and the attempts to destroy the peoples' sovereignty and criminalize women in social struggle. This agenda includes the denunciation of political incarceration, the condemnation of government policies that violate the rights of the peoples, and the never-ending imperialist bombings against territories such as Syria. All over the world, women are fighting against the militarization and

occupation of territories, in solidarity with their Venezuelan, Palestinian, and Sahrawi sisters, who resist blockades, sanctions, and violence every day.

Establishing a broad sector of grassroots, anti-system feminism is a task undertaken by the World March of Women since its inception, which connects us to the history of feminism. Looking back at the history of March 8, we find a memory of struggle and adamant opposition to capitalism. In the early 20th Century, women were already defining their understanding of capitalism as a model that aims to expand across all territories, with its colonialist and racist character, and also a character of women's subordination, therefore a patriarchal character.

This is the major date for the women's movement, and we must think about its meaning and vocation to build grassroots, anti-system feminism. If we look back at women's organizing process since the early 20th Century all the way to present times, we will realize that we have rekindled a lot of women's history, of what our struggles have been like as we resist capitalism and colonialism in our regions and territories. We will also see that the process of building feminism has become more complex and has amplified the perspective of change.

It is important to acknowledge that there have been conflicts and different views in the building of this movement, regarding class relations and the role of the struggle for women's equality on social change, or later the tensions for a stronger incorporation of the dimensions of race and sexuality. But it was from what we have learned that a broader view came to be regarding the challenges we face to build equality for women in a world marked by complex relationships of exploitation, oppression, and domination, and by a huge variety of social formations across different peoples. Working-class women organizing has become part of the historical challenge of women's self-organization and self-emancipation, stating that being part of a global working-class movement in pursuit of change is fundamental.

Dividing us and breaking us apart on the basis of identities is a strategy of capitalism, in which it attacks exactly the main dimension that we must keep as working-class people, which is our unity amidst our diversity to be able to observe plurality without losing sight of the class dimension. Every time we lose sight of the dimension of class, we become more vulnerable to the attacks of capitalism.

When we reject the fragmentation of identities, we present our constitution as political subjects from where we are: from women's movements, the peasant movement, the Black movement, the ecology movement, from our nonconforming bodies and sexualities, from our territories, from the left-wing political parties. Our constitution as political subjects who are the protagonists of our own history is what provides us the thread connecting a project of change.

We reinforce the perspective of permanent organizing by women, which is what sustains the movement and allows us to promote real, profound, radical change. Feminism is not simply a different "narrative." It is a grassroots, collective movement in action. Feminism indicates the irreconcilable contradiction between capital accumulation and the sustainability of life. We take upon ourselves the task of changing the world and women's lives in one movement, capable of putting the sustainability of life on center stage.

Today in the world, we are living a very unique time as women, beyond what we already know as militants, as builders of the women's movement and the broader struggle of women through grassroots feminism. At the core of social movements and sectors that fight capitalism, there is increasing acknowledgement that, within the working class, we, as women, are under attack from exploitation and capitalist control. This is why it is impossible to build anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist politics without incorporating feminism and its anti-patriarchal, anti-racist, anti-colonial struggle.

Our demands also include the struggle against hunger, against genocide, against all wars, and against the tyranny of market authoritarianism, and we know for sure we will be millions struggling for the sustainability of life. When we talk about sustainability of life, we are talking about equality and harmony between humans and between humans and nature.

Our Recent Steps and Our Challenges

In October 2020, the World March of Women celebrated 20 years of resistance and closed its 5th International Action, bringing women from around the world together online to strengthen strategies to struggle and build global alternatives. [Each region systematized their process: Africa, Europe, Asia and South Pacific, Middle East and North Africa, and the Americas](#). Shortly after, the context of the pandemic has led us to create new forms of action, making use of what virtual tools allow us to do, with communication and connection between ourselves.

Additionally, since last year we have been building the process of the “Berta Cáceres International Feminist Organizing School” with the Grassroots Global Justice, Grassroots International, and the Indigenous Environmental Network. In April through July 2021, the first edition of the School brought together sisters from all parts of the world for an intense process of feminist political education toward organizing and mobilizing. This has been a space for deepening and expanding our conversation on feminist economy as a political process that allows us to formulate alternatives in defense of life.

Another impactful process connecting our struggles is regarding our communication efforts. Decentralizing international communication to Brazil has helped to resume the role of communication and expand the exposure of the March, as well as the conversation with other movements to build contents and campaigns based on our shared interests.

As part of this strategy, we have created the [Capire portal, an online feminist communication tool established in early 2021](#) to connect and echo the voices of women in movement, spreading the word about struggles and organizing processes. This is an initiative by the WMW in conversation with women from ally movements, such as La Via Campesina and Friends of the Earth International.