

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*Webcast of the press briefing is available [here](#).*

### **World's Largest Conference on Gender Equality Opens in Vancouver with a Call to Redefine Power at Every Level**

Heads of state from four nations sat side-by-side young leaders and grassroots advocates as delegates from more than 165 countries kicked off the Women Deliver 2019 Conference

(Vancouver, Canada) – The Women Deliver 2019 Conference, the world's largest conference on gender equality and the health, rights, and wellbeing of girls and women, kicked off today with more than 8,000 world leaders, influencers, advocates, academics, activists, and journalists gathered in Vancouver, and more than 100,000 participating in a global dialogue around the world through satellite events and WDLive, the virtual conference. 1,400 youth delegates from 139 countries are expected to attend the Women Deliver 2019 Conference, where every plenary program and most concurrents feature a young person.

The conference will focus on power, and how it can drive – or hinder – progress and change; and how societies must redefine the concept of 'power' and use it as a force for good.

The conference will examine power operating at three levels:

1. The Individual's Power – The Women Deliver 2019 Conference will examine girls' and women's individual power, self-esteem and agency. And how to strengthen that power.
2. Structural power – The Women Deliver 2019 Conference will explore and challenge systems, barriers, and opportunities for progress in power relations, including political, economic, and social structures.
3. The Power of Movements – The Women Deliver 2019 Conference will dive into the power of movements, and how we can shape critical consciousness and marshal collective action for change.

While the Women Deliver 2019 Conference and global dialogue will place a special emphasis on power, the conference will offer solutions to fill the gap on a vast array of issues crucial to gender equality: economic empowerment, women and the environment, nutrition, education, political participation, preventing gender-based violence, health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, human rights, and much more.

"The Women Deliver 2019 Conference is much more than a conference, it is one important step on the march towards gender equality," **said Katja Iversen, Women Deliver President/CEO at the opening press conference.** "We all have power to contribute to a more gender equal world. If we use our individual and collective power – boldly, smartly and collaboratively -- progress will follow."

"The Women Deliver conference will be a truly historic week. I look forward to joining many grassroots leaders and advocates who have dedicated their lives to defending and advancing women's rights," **said the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada.** "We

know we can't take our foot off the pedal, not even for a moment. I'll be at the conference to show Canada's leadership on gender equality isn't going anywhere, and that we're not just speaking up, but stepping up too."

"This conference is also a chance to mobilize against those who reinforce patriarchal power structures, reject multilateralism and push-back against gender equality and women's empowerment," said **UN Women's Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**. "It's a place where advocates from all sectors of society can unite to push back against the push-back."

"As a young woman, advocate and Women Deliver Young Leader, I'm proud to take part in the opening plenary session to help bring visibility to youth-led advocacy and solutions for gender equality from around the world. As an 18-year old Zambian I represent not only the future but the present of youth leadership. Young people are uniquely positioned to disrupt POWER dynamics, make PROGRESS on deeply entrenched issues, and bring CHANGE for girls and women worldwide," said **Natasha Chibesa Wang Mwansa, Women Deliver Young Leader**.

"The Women Deliver 2019 Conference is a watershed moment for gender equality, bringing together thousands of people from across the globe to find solutions to the barriers still faced by women, girls and gender diverse peoples everywhere," said **the Honourable Maryam Monsef, Minister of International Development and Minister for Women and Gender Equality**. "We look forward to continuing our work with governments, businesses, charitable organizations, civil society, and each and every Canadian to leave a legacy post-Women Deliver that will empower women, strengthen families and communities, and create lasting change that benefits everyone."

The conference will take place from 3-6 June 2019 at the Vancouver Convention Center. Additional key speakers include:

- Tarana Burke, founder of the 'me too' movement
- Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director, Oxfam International
- Farwiza Farhan, Leader, Forest, Nature, and Environment Aceh
- Henrietta H Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF
- Ken Frazier, Chairman of the Board & CEO, Merck + Co., Inc.
- Melinda Gates, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Waneek Horn-Miller, Indigenous Olympian
- Hina Jilani, Supreme Court of Pakistan
- Alan Jope, CEO, Unilever
- Natalia Kanem, Executive Director, UNFPA
- Angélique Kidjo, Grammy Award winning singer
- Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mary of Denmark
- Osvaldo Rudloff, Executive Director, OLACEFS (Latin American and Caribbean Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions)
- Ailbhe Smyth, Co-Director, Together for Yes
- Theo Sowa, CEO, African Women's Development Fund
- Maysoon Zayid, Actress, Comedian, Writer and Disability Advocate

The conference has sparked a global dialogue around the world through satellite events and virtual participation. To date, more than 186 events on six continents have registered as satellite events, estimated to reach more than 82,000 people.

Canada has especially seen a strong effort to mobilize community engagement around the conference through the Women Deliver Mobilization Canada campaign. With events in every region and most provinces and territories, thousands of Canadians have joined together over the past year to advance the conversation on gender equality.

Anyone can tune into the conference for free through the virtual conference, WDLive, which will be streaming from 3-6 June 2019 on [wd2019.org](http://wd2019.org).

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**About Women Deliver.** Women Deliver is a leading global advocate that champions gender equality and the health and rights of girls and women. Our advocacy drives investment – political and financial – in the lives of girls and women worldwide. We harness evidence and unite diverse voices to spark commitment to gender equality. And we get results. Anchored in sexual and reproductive health, we advocate for the rights of girls and women across every aspect of their lives. We know that investing in girls and women will deliver progress for all. And every three years, we galvanize momentum at the global Women Deliver Conference – our signature event. It’s a bold and diverse gathering, a fueling station of ideas, and generator of action, convening thousands of decision-makers from civil society, governments, the private sector, and international agencies alongside advocates, activists, and journalists to identify solutions and drive change for girls and women.

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