

5th Ministerial Conference on Feminist Foreign Policy: Building peace and democracy

June 2–3, 2026, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
(Plaza del Marqués de Salamanca, 8 – Madrid)

Side Event 'Dismantling Gender Apartheid: Women's Leadership, Accountability, and the Responsibility of States

June 3 , Auditorium (12:30-13:30)

Context

Nearly five years after the Taliban's return to power, Afghan women and girls are living under an unprecedented system of exclusion and subjugation. Through a web of over 200 decrees and repressive and punitive enforcement practices, women and girls have been removed from education, employment, public life, and denied their freedom of movement and access to justice. Afghan women, alongside human rights defenders, UN experts, and an increasing number of Member States, have described this system – designed to institutionalize

systematic gender-based domination and oppression - as "gender apartheid".

This situation raises urgent questions not only of gender equality, but of accountability under international law to adequately capture the institutionalised regime of gender-based domination the Taliban have built and, in doing so, exposes a gap in the existing legal accountability framework.

At the same time, the negotiations on the draft Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes Against Humanity – the first UN treaty on core international crimes since the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court – offer a much-needed pathway to address this gap. Preparatory discussions are expected in 2026–2027, with formal negotiation sessions in 2028–2029. Member States are currently considering the scope of crimes to be covered by the treaty, with several delegations having already raised the question of how institutionalised gender-based oppression should be reflected within this framework. In April

2026, Member States put forward initial proposals for amendments to the draft convention – the baseline for negotiations.

The V Ministerial Conference on Feminist Foreign Policy provides a timely opportunity for a focused discussion that supports informed engagement with these issues and encourages coherent follow-up across multilateral political and legal processes. This moment is particularly formative, as Member States are simultaneously shaping global priorities on gender justice while engaging in ongoing processes to strengthen international accountability frameworks.

Session Objectives

This side event aims to expand visibility around growing momentum to recognise “gender apartheid” as a crime against humanity under international law, while encouraging meaningful state engagement with accountability pathways in order to eliminate discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and to address structural barriers.

Panel

Horia Mosadiq, afghan activist, Rights Monitor Media & Safety & Risk Mitigation Organization

Tamana Paryaani, Afghan women’s protest movement

Alyssa Yamamoto, End Gender Apartheid Campaign

Elisenda Calvet, Professor of International Law, University of Barcelona; judge of the People’s Tribunal for Women of Afghanistan

Closing: **Lucía García Rico**, Director General for the United Nations, International Organisations and Human Rights of Spain, and **Noelia Martínez Franchi**, Deputy Director General for Political Affairs and Special Representative for Gender Equality of Uruguay

Moderator: **Gaisu Yari**, Malala Fund