



International Advocacy Reports and Statements

A compilation of impressions and highlights by the IFUW Delegates

54th Commission on the Status of Women

Beijing +15 Parallel events

New York, March 2010

Edited by Shaila Rao Mistry, Member WG- USA

NGO Forum Beijing +15

Each year, the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, organizes an NGO Consultation Forum in preparation for the CSW. This year the NGO Forum Beijing +15, undertook a 15-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action. It brought together activists from around the world to issue joint statements and provide wording for the Agreed Conclusions of the annual UN CSW.

The programme of the NGO Forum *by Catherine Moore, UN Representative New York, USA*

Faced with the challenge of limited space at the United Nations, NGO CSW secured an alternate venue for the two-day event at The Salvation Army Building on west 14th Street in New York City. Wisely, they also engaged a consultant for “crowd flow.”

The program put forth successful strategies to involve the regions in the planning process as well as seek regional participants - the voices from the regions - for the program. The four panel presentations included representatives from Philippines, USA, Tanzania, Peru, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Iran/USA, Kenya, China, Germany, Lebanon, USA, Botswana, Peru, Austria, Netherlands, Mexico, and India. The keynote speaker was Dr. Sima Samar, chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.

The program was balanced on a variety of levels and included children as performing artists and musicians. Ms. Lynn Nottage read a piece of her Broadway play, “Ruined.” focuses on women as survivors of conditions in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Portions of most events were webcast with possible distribution/availability. The closing event was “Call to Action.” With a dramatic, in my view, presentation of our “Global Voices for Actions and Commitments” to special guests: UN Assistant Secretary General Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, Chair of the Bureau of CSW54, and Executive Director of UNFPA.

Pre-planning and the IFUW meeting on Sunday 28 February

by Leena-Maia Lauren, CIR, Finland

The pre-planning at HQ and dissemination via email of all the relevant information to the delegates is appreciated. The list of 7 Action points by Vice President Marianne Haslegrave is concise enough for guidance and target of delegation work duties. These stated aims for IFUW in 2010 need to be compared to the results which are reported by the delegates. Whose responsibility? However, as IFUW is the only global ambassador for Women in Higher Education this focus was not clearly embedded in the list, only once is the tertiary level of education mentioned. Therefore during my one week of CSW-work I keenly followed the notion of Higher Education.

IFUW's team organized a briefing meeting for its delegation on Sunday 28 February evening. This Cheese and Wine party in Manhattan high-rise for the IFUW delegates was nicely prepared. At this gathering IFUW President Louise Croot opened the discussions and offered each participant to present herself. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the IFUW NYC hostesses!

The creatively collected booklet by Catherine Moore was a solid source of information during the whole CSW-54 and its side events. The cover page is very well in line with the IFUW image: Key to Empowering Women and Girls for Leadership, Peace and Human Security.

The daily briefings by IFUW at CSW while in NYC are important to the delegates present who are mostly working on their own. The linking with the IFUW delegation was rather fragmented as this year the procedure of regular meetings was missing, and I do hope that it will be again in operation next year.

CSW Main programme

Impressions of a First Timer *by Sushil Baradwaj, IFUW Vice-President, India*

This being the year of Beijing+15 attendance was considerably higher and the lines for registration longer. I was touched to see women of all ages, 21 to 81 and beyond as well as women in wheel chairs from all continents, all patiently moving from this queue to that as required....

The General Assembly on March 1 was in conference rooms with really large screens. Prior to start of the session the atmosphere was like a huge fair where people met, hugged each other. It was too crowded. There were more people than seats so some sat on stairs and on the floor and still more were coming. I was helped to a seat by Shaila Mistry.

One event that caught my eye on March 3. It was titled Leveraging Arab Women's Power 15 Years after Beijing and 10 Years of MDGs, 30 Years of CEDAW, organized by an NGO named KARAMA (Dignity), supported by UNIFEM. The seminar covered: Progress and challenges of Implementing Beijing PFA in Arab States", Using CEDAW in Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, Remaining Challenges to Meet MDGs in the Arab States today and The Way Forward: Accelerating the MDGs, CEDAW, Res. 1325 and Beijing PFA in the Arab Region. Each of these topics was covered candidly and in detail, by women with comparatively modern approach and surprisingly there were women very few upset by modernity.

Comments from a Veteran *by Griselda Kenyon, UWE President, UK*

The subject matter, the whole of the Platform for Action from Beijing, meant that all the issues could not be covered and people who had particular interests could not pursue them properly. The Board of CSW were afraid that if there were extensive debate some of the issues might go backward if conclusions were agreed which were not as far reaching as the Beijing ones. They therefore decided that the outcome document of the meeting would be a declaration of support for the PFA and encouragement to press for further action. No discussion of this was allowed in a plenary meeting, which annoyed everybody.

There was concern about the Millennium Development Goals which did not build on the BPFA, defined gender equality narrowly (violence is not included) so that the targets were not reached. The BPFA is much wider and more beneficial as a document for women than the MDGs. Governments lack the will to integrate either the PFA or the MDGs into domestic legislation, though this could be done through CEDAW. The question was asked as to how to improve the accountability of States!

Parallel Events

Parallel events are a critical part of the CSW. They are organized at all levels and by organizations of all sizes and types, including governments, quasi-governmental organizations, private sector, NGOs, etc. This is where the “real” work of the women’s movement takes place. Attending parallel events gives a good idea on the true pulse of the status of women across the globe.

This years CSW unfortunately started with some serious challenges in the process of registration of the delegates with some waiting almost all whole day. Long lines, snow and walking distances, renovations did not assist a smooth beginning. Further, the agreed conclusions were adopted without discussion or input on the second day. CSW members were excluded from many critical sessions as some were restricted to individual passes. The NGOs and the delegates this year sent a resounding message to the UN on the unacceptability of the implicit lack of respect for women and requesting better organization for next year.

Logistics and inconveniences by *Ilona Graenitz, IFUW Representative Vienna, Austria*

It was the first time that the NGO Briefing took place at premises 10 blocks away and the EU Briefings open to NGOs at the Spanish Embassy which put extra stress on the delegates. Side-events were limited and the organizations had to pay 75 US \$ by credit card, again an obstacle for smaller groups or organizations from developing countries.

For some side-events tickets were needed, there were again long queues and not every delegate could get to the side-event she would have been interested in. This was also made difficult by the fact that side-events dealing with similar issues took place at the same time, often at different venues.

In my capacity as CONGO Vice president I have heard complaints from NGOs in New York and later through electronic mail. I would like to suggest that IFUW submits a letter of complaint as well. There is a working group at the UN in New York looking into this matter and a letter to the Secretary General has been sent by the CONGO President concerning access of NGOs.

A Case of Human Rights by *Ati Bloom, The Netherlands*

The real stories about what has been going on in the world could be more truthfully heard in the presentations of the many NGO’s held in the temporary buildings of the UN (for which you needed to queue again) or in the Salvation Army or in the Church Centre or in other buildings around. I walked a lot.

In a parallel event, organized by the International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, I gave my presentation on a case: OPUZ vs. Turkey. In short: The Turkish local authorities repeatedly did not take action in cases of violence committed in a marital relationship, herewith violating various articles of the European Convention on Human Rights. At last, a judgment of the European Court of Human Rights issued on June 9, 2009, marked a real progress regarding women’s rights. With this judgment, governments are now put on notice that they should review their laws etc.

Women Can’t Wait by *Alice Siqin Yang, USA*

I was strongly impressed by the one-woman show “Women Can’t Wait” written and performed by Tony-award winner Sarah Jones. She showcased seven women’s voices (Indian, Japanese, French, Jordan, American, Orthodox-Jewish, and Kenyan) on the discriminatory laws and practices against women in different countries. Women cannot wait and changes should be made. It was such an appropriate topic at the UN conference on women. Accent does not matter; skin color does not matter; but gender equality matters for us all for a more peaceful world.

I was impressed by the participation and advocacy of Prof. Pam Rajput from India who presented at the NGO panel on “Violence against Women in Politics” organized by *South Asia Partnership (SAP)*

International. She looked like a kind grandmother, but determined. She is my role model for fighting for women's rights.

Education, economy and climate by *Sonya Höstman, Finland*

At the opening session we celebrated the International Women's day with the General Secretary Ban Ki-moon. He gave a very encouraging speech of support and he mentioned that he is the father of daughters and he completely agree that women has to have the same possibilities as men. Since 2006, many of our members have been working on the Gender Equity Architecture Reform GEAR Campaign and it looks like it is becoming realty!

I am interested in questions about education, economy and climate and I found many events that stressed on these questions. One interesting one was on "Women's Business Incubators – Innovation & Result" where we could listen to different organizations and their efforts in helping and strengthening the economic situation of women.

I was also very happy to recognize that there was a event about climate "Gender equality and Climate Change" and even better, our famous "green" women from Finland Heidi Hautala, Finnish Council for Gender Equality made a speech about "Continuing the commitment".

UNIFEM by *Maria Toivanen, CIR, Finland*

As I am also board member of Finland's UNIFEM it was most interesting to follow discussions concerning the new Gender Unit. Naturally my concern is how to safeguard the excellent brand UNIFEM has in Finland and at the same time get a new and much more efficient and hopefully less bureaucratic organization. All women organizations should work together to guarantee that the new entity has a clear programmatic mandate and substantial operational capacity.

The other interesting event was an Afghanistan panel: Women's Participation in Peace-building. More girls are now attending school and more women can work outside home, but that is far from enough. Most interesting was the contribution of Ms. Afifa Azim, coordinator of the Afghan Women Network. "Women's rights is what the battle is about", was a focal point of her speech. Afghani women want peace, but not on the expense of women rights. The answer by Mr. Tanin permanent Representative to UN to a question from the audience was very revealing. The question was: If women are so important to the decision making, why were Afghani women excluded from London Conference? At least I did not hear a clear answer, instead Mr. Tanin said that if women were able to specify their wishes they could be heard.

A case study on maternal mortality by *Polly Woodard, IFUW Representative New York, USA*

I have one case to share regarding maternal mortality as reported to me by a Public Health Physician from Africa: A fifteen year old girl living in a rural area infected with hookworm causing a hemoglobin of 8 grams (normal 12-16 grams) becomes pregnant. Bleeding complications occur and treatment to save the girl and her unborn child is two travel days away. The first day is by walking and/or animal travel. Day two would be by motor transport. The girl and her unborn child do not survive because of the bleeding, extreme low hemoglobin and lack of access to nearby emergence medical care. \$1.00 (US) every six months would buy the needed medicine to treat hookworm. It's a dose taken orally with few side effects. However, this medicine taken during pregnancy harms the fetus. Hookworm comes from water that does not have an on going flow. The worm attaches to the intestine and lives on the blood of its victim. Thus medicine costing only a dollar every six months and used as a preventative measure could have saved this young mother's life.

The fruits of the Georgian participation by *Prof. Tamara Kiknazde, President, Georgia*

On Wednesday 3 March, members of our delegation were invited at the Regional Consultation on Strengthening Support to Gender Equality in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of

Independent States organized by UNIFEM with representatives of Governments and Non-Governmental organizations at the Turkish Center.

At this meeting the Head of the Georgian delegation Prof. Tamara Kiknadze participated in panel discussion about the situation and initiative in CIS countries and proposed the idea of creating of Caucasian Women's parliament with participation of prominent women of South Caucasian and North Caucasus Republics of Russia. This parliament would be the affective body in promoting of women's issues and strengthening peace processes in Caucasian regain. This idea has been supported by the participants of the meeting and the will of organizing the preliminary meeting of NGOs of representatives of the Caucasian Region has been expressed.

IFUW and UNICEF

by Louise Croot, IFUW President, New Zealand

On the agenda of the IFUW President was to follow up on the IFUW partnership with UNICEF so I met in person with Mr Daniel Seymour of UNICEF International. The aim of the meeting was to discuss matters from earlier meetings (2008 and 2009) and to have a dialogue about current concerns of both parties. During the year ahead IFUW Representatives in New York will be able to build on this growing relationship with UNICEF.

Agenda items included:

- Impact of GEAR (Gender Architecture) - the new integrated entity proposed
- UN One Country integrated services approach pilot programmes: On the work of UNICEF gender specialists who work in the one country coordinated pilot projects
- Beijing+15 review aspects considering the Girl Child. IFUW has been involved with this initiative over more than 15 years and it was the work of former IFUW President, Mary Purcell that saw the concerns about the Girl Child included during the final drafting days of the Beijing Platform for Action 1995
- Has the governments' response to the requests for disaggregated data for gender and age improved? A little. The analysis is showing that sensitivity to the economically poorest 20% of the range of data is needed to draw out the depth of detail for a change of emphasis in that cohort of girls.
- Gender Equality and Human Rights Education – E-learning education training course to start in 2010
- Offer of in-country resource people from our graduate women - NFAs where there are UNICEF Donor Committees and where there are teams

Conclusions and Three Critical Developments

by Shaila Rao Mistry, USA

It has been both encouraging and interesting for me to observe some thematic developments which are enabling advancement of women's rights and issues.

In 2006 we began discussions on Women in High decision making place. I had the opportunity to chair the caucus and lead the discussions and formulate language which was later adopted by the CSW declared document. We were at the time pushing for capacity building and for independent women's entity which would be an umbrella for all women's issues. I recall the hope with which more than 50 member states worked together to present a coherent document. This caucus was a clear example of how NGOs across the globe came together to provide clear direction as to the future of policy mandate improve the lives of girls and women world wide. Gear as we know it now was the brain child of the efforts in 2006. We are fortunate to see it come so close to fruition. Yet our work is cut out for us it is imperative that we continue to shape and develop the creation of the entity so that the structure meets the destiny of our expectations.

Secondly it is encouraging and strategic to see the increasing inclusion of the private sector at the CSW. Economic independence lies at the heart of gender parity. Recognition of the Private sector and the women who lead the economy and make a real difference at many levels for other women. Women have always been hidden contributors to the home, family and community and economy. Only in recent years are we seeing women's organizations invited them to become part of the gender parity discussions. This is hitherto unrecognized population, who are the final bastions playing a significant role in bring change into the lives of women and the economy. They provide the jobs , help families and are a role model for others to witness that women can really make a change and actually implement all of the policies and discussion that are taking place at the level of government and NGO level .This is indeed a very positive theme for the women's movement

Finally the main development that really excites me is the fact that we are beginning to talk about and recognize the partnership with men. In recent years the women's movement has awaked to the realization that men are the other half. "We cannot liberate or make changes without partnership with men and boys. Both as a mother, wife and an entrepreneur, I rejoice in this final realization. For in the real world there is no segregation of feminists and the worlds. We are a team and in teaming lies our strength and advancement "