



CSW60 Helvi Sipilä Seminar 17 March 2016

Niini Vartia-Paukku

Finnish Federation of Graduate Women

cultureconnecting@gmail.com

Women at the Heart of Peace and Security

A new approach is required where women are given a greater role in peace-building efforts. Recent studies indicate that more sustainable peace agreements are reached when women are included in the peace processes.

The theme “Women at the Heart of Peace and Security” was discussed at the 11th Helvi Sipilä Seminar that was held at the CSW60 at the UN in New York on 17 March 2016. Helvi Sipilä, a Finnish lawyer and diplomat, was the first female Assistant Secretary-General of the UN.

Women could make a change for building lasting peace, said the chair of the Seminar Eva Biaudet, President of the National Council of Women of Finland and Representative at the Finnish Parliament. – There still remains a huge implementation gap between resolutions made and their implementation, said Biaudet.

In the opening remarks of the seminar Ambassador Kai Sauer noted that Helvi Sipilä gave a lasting legacy to women in their efforts to achieve gender equality. He added that Helvi Sipilä would surely have been interested in the debates presently taking place about the possibility of a female successor for the UN Secretary-General in 2017.

According to Päivi Kannisto, Chief of the Peace and Security Unit of UN Women, The Global Study and other recent studies provide evidence confirming that women’s meaningful participation and representation in decision-making enhances the quality of peace and security work and outcomes – not to mention that it is also a human right. Yet, a study of 31 peace processes, which took place from 1992 to 2011, revealed that less than 9 per cent of those at the peace table were women. Kannisto reminded that peace does not happen when you sign an agreement, it needs to be built.

Quality education helps develop a balanced future society. Jolie Massay, CIR, the Congolese Federation of University Women, hopes that in the future all girls in the D.R. Congo could be given free schooling. - How can we build peace and security without women? asked Jolie Massay. She urges women to organise themselves to make a better future for themselves and their families. Jolie Massay says that the international community can also help in finding ways to develop sustainable peace in the D.R. of Congo.

Andrea Gradiz, Vice President, World YWCA described the many challenges that young women face in her home country Honduras, such as sexual harassment and poverty. Women’s empowerment is needed in peace-building efforts, but also at home and in the labour market. Women are also needed in politics and Andrea Gradiz hopes to see the equal gender balance of 50-50 both in the government

and in the private sector, where the presence of women has been proven to develop better functioning in all sectors.

Ambassador Sauer, Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations, reminded that the Helvi Sipilä Seminar is a good example of a Finnish tradition of doing things together. The event was organised by the Finnish Federation of Graduate Women together with the Permanent Mission of Finland to the UN and four other women's organisations in Finland.