



An Overview

UN Commission on the Status of Women 60

UN Centre New York City, NY USA

50/50 by 2030

Theme: Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development

Review theme: The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls

Attempting to summarise both the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 2016 meeting itself and GWI delegates' reactions and responses to is a daunting task. Thank you to all who submitted reports on the template and others who wrote wonderful reports for your countries and who allowed here a brief picture of your experiences. First, may I state that the efforts of both the GWI Board and our staff were invaluable. Not only was the information pertinent to GWI's purpose and activities, but it was available in such attractive form that the colourful Manifesto Cards caught the eyes of many.

The first week GWI held two breakfast meetings for all members of GWI, not only GWI delegates, and President Catherine Bell and Executive Director Danièle Castle ably briefed us on expectations and GWI's activities and projects. Whether an experienced attendee or a first timer, between GWI's information and that of the hardworking GWI United Nations (UN) New York Representatives living in New York, who are also NGO CSW Committee members, or the numerous flyers handed out by NGOs themselves, one did not lack for vital information to be studied and shared.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) adopted by 193 member states in 2015 will shape the development agenda. They are meant to close the gap in the Millennial Development Goals and are directed to all nation states.

The GWI delegation was representative of nine national federations and associations (NFAs) - Australia, Canada, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Finland, Kenya, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, and the USA - and included the three permanent GWI UN Representatives in New York, our GWI President and Executive Director. Many more GWI members were part of the nearly 8,000 women from Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) accredited organisations present.

Parallel events were presented by six GWI affiliates. All were exceptionally well attended; at the events or later many wonderful ideas were discussed and practices examined. **GWI United Nations Representative Ms Mick Minard read the GWI statement on the overall CSW60 theme Women's Empowerment and its link to Sustainable Development.**

As stated in one of our GWI messages *"The interaction between national pressures and international pressures is what makes governments change policies and laws. With accurate facts GWI and NFAs can influence policy in their home countries to ensure commitment and monitoring."* GWI focused on empowerment for girls being gained through education, it being the key to sustainable development. Many hours were spent by delegates attending side events, parallel events, official CSW morning briefings where we tracked the proposals of NGOs proposing changes to the draft CSW Outcome document (all NGOs have the opportunity to submit written and oral statements prior to the March meeting) or simply exchanging ideas with NGO delegates from everywhere and with those of our own governments. We were left reflecting on the circumstances of the larger world and pondering on ways of implementation. In the end, the Outcome document was agreed to fairly easily. It is now in the hands of the members of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

An online reading of the 17 Sustainable Goals and targets leaves no uncertainty about the fact that now is the time for implementation. Indeed it was stated by many that the three most important words to be heard and said regarding these goals were implementation, implementation implementation. And although any success for women and girls is related to Goals number 4 and 5, an emphasis on women and girls' conditions should be a part of the other 15 Goals as well.

The Sunday Consultation Day prior to the official meetings, the best way to get an overall view, chose the theme of No One Left Behind. But there will be some left behind and it will in all probability be women. There was overall a feeling of a "new momentum" and Director of UN Women Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka stated "We must preserve what we have accomplished and must move girls from the back to the front". GWI was front and centre on the opening day, taking part in a panel on Education and Health. Catherine Bell spoke about our *Teachers for Rural Futures* project in Uganda regarding increasing the numbers of qualified women teachers, about the need for safer schools, better access to quality education, and importance of cultivating local communities as leaders for education. She also talked about the *GWI Girls' Choices* workshop and mentoring project, and the mobile app, that is being designed to help girls make choices, thus keeping them in school and allowing them to select careers freely.

WE HEARD

One speaker from Nepal had seen women from abroad in Nepal as trekkers, but when at Beijing 1995 she saw these same women in a different role as participants in the conference advocating for better lives for all women she realized her own particular concern of violence against women was a global issue.

REFUGEES

Only one government is taking into account the gender of asylum seekers – Canada. A huge majority of refugees are male – 70%. Women are not really considered. The welcome kits are almost all designed for men. One speaker shared a vision of a group of 8 refugees – 7 men with sneakers and one barefoot woman carrying three children.

The refugee women sometimes need to use sex to get a passport or to get transportation. Latrines and sleeping arrangements are not segregated and some women do not eat or drink much to avoid having to use the washrooms. They worry about sleeping at night.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

Concerning the new school curriculum in the UK to encourage more girls into STEM- this is going to work only if work is done on changing attitudes of girls, boys, families and guidance counsellors. NFAs and GWI should be advocating widely on the GWI Core Message #11: *GWl advocates for girls to be actively encouraged to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and information and communications technology (ICTs), to increase innovation and close the gender gap within STEM profess.*

Because we know attitudes need changing those working on the STEM curriculum need to have a strong voice to change community attitudes, while continuing their ongoing and courageous efforts within the school system.

WOMEN IN THE PEACE PROGRESS: Why is this important?

1. If women are involved there is more likelihood of the peace succeeding and lasting.
2. In encouraging women at the peace table, incentives need to be included. Furthermore, the women need to reason through the thinking of the decision makers. The latter must be convinced there is added value.
3. Women give more attention to gender related issues.

Countries now including women in the peace process are Columbia and Syria.

Ongoing issues... Implementation urgent

- Work continues on Violence Against Women (VAW).
- The need to increase the number of women in government delegates is being stated loudly.
- Unpaid work also still a topic of note.
- It is important to participate in the 16 days against Violence campaign.
- Need to push CEDAW implementation efforts.
- Need more work on Gender equality

Noteworthy: At CSW60, for the first time, 10 Member States submitted voluntary reviews of their progress towards the historic [Agreed Conclusions](#) from the fifty-seventh session of the CSW (2013), which focused on ending violence against women. And eight of these countries have joined UN Women's more recent [Step It Up](#) initiative, making national commitments to close the gender equality gap in a range of areas, some of which relate specifically to ending violence against women. Educate children early in childhood about gender equality and respect of persons and against violence against girls. Support family units of all kinds. Protect the vulnerable such as women and girls with disabilities especially those with impaired cognition.