

GWJ United Nation Representative Advocacy Report Vienna 2018

GWJ advocacy goals

1. 100% of United Nations Member States commit to policy, legislation, budget and infrastructure to facilitate transition of girls from primary to secondary school and ensure gender parity and gender equality throughout secondary education by 2030.
2. By 2030 100% of United Nations low income Member States have increased access to tertiary education for girls and women by 50%.
3. 100% of United Nations Member States commit to and implement policies for continuing education to empower women throughout the life course, within the formal and informal economies.
4. Influence the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.
5. All 17 SDGs will include girls' education targets.

Meeting attended: (place, date, time, name of meeting)

2018 Vienna ACUNS Conference 'Achieving Gender Equality and Female Empowerment: A Collaborative Vision of SDG 5'

Vienna International Centre, January 10-12, 2018

Subject of meeting

The Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS) Vienna 2018 conference was on the actions, potentials, and challenges linked to SDG 5: '**Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.**' Attendees were from the Vienna-based UN organizations, the diplomatic community, civil society, NGOs, academics, business leaders and media representatives.

The objectives of the three day conference were:

- 1) To share best practices, engage dialogues, and explore potential future collaborations in the multi-stakeholder forum;
- 2) To empower youth by featuring them on the panels and in the planning of the event;
- 3) To showcase UNODA's Women Scholarship for Peace Global South program by including alumni on panels;
- 4) To highlight the International Gender Champions – Vienna Initiative which was launched in June 2017, with 52 UN leaders and senior diplomats making pledges on gender equality.

The Conference was opened by UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed. She emphasized the importance of education for the promotion of SDG 5 Gender Equality and stressed that the elimination of discrimination and violence against girls must be a priority. Other speakers included

Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary CTBTO, who talked to the importance of women's empowerment, and Ambassadors / Representatives from Austria, Australia, Sweden and the US.

A feature of the conference was a speech by Doaa Al Zamel, a Syrian student and subject of "*A Hope More Powerful Than the Sea: One Refugee's Incredible Story of Love, Loss, and Survival*", a book by Melissa Fleming. Doaa fled the war in Syria through Egypt and crossed the sea to Europe. She was among the few survivors of a disastrous boat journey, rescuing a small child in the process. In her speech, she made an appeal to end the war. When asked what she would change, she said that 'one needs to start with oneself'. (We may hear more about Doaa – Steven Spielberg is planning a film about her extraordinary story).



Doaa Al Zamel at the Conference

Panel sessions over the three days included:

- *Empowering Female Leaders,*
- *Women at Risk*
- *My Path to Leadership* - where speakers shared their personal stories, experience and advice.
- *Preventing Violence at Home*
- *Ensuring Access to Sexual and Reproductive Rights*
- *Confronting Specific Dangers Faced by Women during Times of War*
- *Cross-cutting Gender Issues: Migration, Corruption and Environment*
- *Encouraging Women to Excel in Technology Fields*
- *Gender Equality and Equal Access to Economic Resources*

The third day included *Rural Women, Resources and Empowerment*. A presentation was made by the Chair of the Associated Country Women of the World, who spoke about ACWW's projects in Uganda; an expert on Rural Development in Austria, where rural women speak to school classes about food production / rural issues, also spoke. She emphasised the important role that women play in sustainable food security. In *Women's Critical Role in the Common Good*, Mariet Verhoef-Cohen, the President of Soroptimist International and Chair of Women for Water, spoke about the Women for Water Partnership which concerns SDG 6 (clear water and sanitation).

The last panel session of each day was for the Young Scholars of the Regional Academy on the United Nations (RAUN) - a multicultural educational initiative to train an emerging generation of young scholars in issues of importance to the UN. They presented the findings of their research on various aspects of:

1. *Impact of violence and drugs on women and their role as solution providers*
2. *Cross-cutting gender issues: migration, corruption and environment*
3. *A more gender-balanced world: Women participation in policy, political, economic and developmental spheres*

Refers to SDG no #: (please reference) 4, 5, 6, 10, and others

Intervention by GWI rep: (what you did)

During the session on *Rural Women, Resources and Empowerment*, I made a statement from the floor, introducing GWI and relevant GWI positions / projects (Teachers for Rural Futures).



Elisabeth Francis speaking

Personal observations :

The broad spectrum of topics covered at the Conference and the wide-ranging discussions gave a very thorough overview of the current status of women's issues, the path to gender equality, and the empowerment of women and girls. The importance of women's education was stressed by very many of the speakers.

Did you take any photographs? If yes, please include captions Yes

May GWI use this information on its social media? Yes

Please send to the GWI office : sdl@graduatewomen.org and include photos where possible

Elisabeth Francis
Vienna