

## Advocacy Report – Side Events attended



GWJ co-sponsored four side events at the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the CCPCJ:

**1. Emerging Threats Against Women and Girls in the Digital Era: Artificial Intelligence and Gaslighting:** Organized by Soroptimist International with the support of African Action on AIDS, **Graduate Women International**, the International Association of Applied Psychology and the Women's Federation for World Peace International.

Speakers included: Gail Dekreon, Superior Court Judge in San Francisco; Dr Julia Zukrigl, AI expert and Managing Director of the DATA story LAB; Shaleen Wanjiru Njoki, journalist; Marlene Capra, Founder of SpeakSAFE; Linda Witong, retired US Prosecutor.

Increasing pushback against the human rights of women and girls and the evolving digital landscape necessitate renewed efforts to address violence against women and girls (VAWG), both online and offline. The abusive use of technology, including artificial intelligence (AI), is one of the many root causes of VAWG.

Harassment or online abuse can lead to emotional suffering, adverse health impacts, and, in some cases, physical harm for the victims. This can discourage women from participating in public life, speaking up, pursuing public roles, or advocating for women's issues. AI introduces a new level of risk due to its scalability.

**Gaslighting** is a form of psychological abuse or manipulation in which the abuser seeks to instil self-doubt and confusion in their victim, causing them to question their sanity, memories, or perception of reality. This can occur online, through AI, or in person. It is often employed by abusive individuals, manipulating and using deception to isolate a partner and convince them they are experiencing mental illness. Gaslighting can lead to victim-blaming and even suicide. Public awareness about the methods and motives behind gaslighting is urgently needed.

The panel presented five actionable measures that can make a real difference in protecting women and girls from AI-enabled harassment and violence. These five measures focussed on stronger penalties, raising awareness, improving AI literacy, empowering women and girls, and providing victim support, even through AI itself.

Some of the key points made:

- AI's perspectives are dominated by databases that have historically been male controlled and oriented. This has resulted in AI's greater objectification of women and the promotion of gender inequality.
- there is a need to influence courts / lawmakers to set aside existing biases to protect women and girls from cyber abuse.

- what would you do if you received a message threatening the release of a fake porn video of you or your daughter, unless you complied with financial demands? This may not be a hypothetical question – it is frequently happening.
- new threats such as deepfake exploitation, cyber harassment, AI-driven gaslighting are rising – outpacing legal protections.
- youth are being targeted through social media, apps, gaming, AI and sextortion. Families, schools and law enforcement are struggling to respond.
- Yes, youth are being impacted but so also are older women, who are highly vulnerable to cybercrime. Digital literacy must be improved, so that older women can better protect themselves online.

**2. Climate Crimes and Gender-Based Violence: Strategies to Raise Awareness, Prevent, and Combat Climate-Induced Gender-Based Violence:** Organized by ZONTA International with the support of the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, UNFPA, **Graduate Women International**, African Action on Aids (AAA), IBPW, NGO CSW Vienna, NGO Committee on Sustainable Development, Soroptimist Intl, the African Women's Organisation (AWO), KENNIS and IADL.

Rising temperatures and other impacts of climate change are forecast to increase the frequency and severity of extreme weather events and intensify poverty and inequality. These weather disasters destroy livelihoods, disrupt access to essential services and heighten vulnerabilities, especially for women and marginalized groups. Panellists discussed how climate change not only damages the environment but also fuels human rights violations against women, including GBV. For instance, we heard from the UNODC Access to Justice team leader that a one-degree increase in temperature results in a 4.7% rise in VAWG. NGO colleagues talked about related projects in Asia and Africa demonstrating the value of civil society involvement.



*Panellists from the side-events*

**3. Guardianship Risks: How to Prevent Abuse:** Organized by the International Federation of Business and Professional Women with the support of the European Federation for the Welfare of the Elderly, the International Federation on Ageing, Soroptimist International, International Inner Wheel, the European Federation of Older Students in Universities, **Graduate Women International**, the International Council of Women, and others.

Guardianship for older persons is a legal mechanism designed to protect individuals who are unable to manage their personal or financial affairs. It ensures that vulnerable older persons receive the necessary support and protection, particularly in managing finances and healthcare decisions. However, even the best guardianship system is not without risks. In many cases, legislative provisions fail to adequately safeguard older persons' basic rights. Unethical practices by courts, medical doctors, and guardians themselves can lead to misrepresentation of older persons, causing them to lose control over their assets, personal decisions, and autonomy. The side event focused on how to protect older persons from the risks and potential abuses associated with guardianship systems and discussed strategies how to prevent abuse. Older women may be particularly at risk.

**4. Family and Non-Family Non-State Torture (NST), Human Trafficking, Femicidal Risks: A Victim-Centred Approach:** Organized by the National Council of Women of Canada with the support of the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Association against Femicide, Democracy Development Centre, the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas, Good Sheppard International Justice and Peace, **Graduate Women International**, the International Alliance of Women, the National Alliance of Women's Organisations, and others. Co-sponsorship of this side event was arranged through the Canada/US NFAs.



*Panellists / audience at the side events*

I also represented GWI at the following side events:

- **Building Resilience to Organized Crime in Times of Crisis:** Organized by the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) with the support of Norway, Switzerland, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Canada.
- **Combating Crimes that Affect the Environment to Protect Biodiversity: Strategies and National Initiatives:** Organized by Armenia with the support of France, the UNODC Border Management Branch, Interpol and GI-TOC. We are facing increasing non-compliance with environmental biodiversity regulations.
- **Disarm Organized Crime: UNODC Strategic Approach against Illicit Firearms (2025-30):** Organized by the UNODC Firearms Trafficking Section with the support of Germany and the European Union.
- **40 Years Since the UN Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power: What's Next?** Organized by Italy with the support of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Arab Emirates, the European Union, the UNODC Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Section, and others.
- **Renewing our Promise: Strengthening Support for Women in Corrections:** Organized by: the Thailand Institute of Justice; supported by: South Africa, Thailand, the UNODC Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Section, the UN Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders and Penal Reform International. – The Bangkok Rules.
- **Why We Are Susceptible to Fraud: Insights into Vulnerability and Resilience:** Organized by: Singapore Government, co-sponsored by: UK Government, Japan; in collaboration with: UNODC's Global Programme on Implementing the Organized Crime Convention. Panellists covered: How do fraudsters exploit human vulnerabilities to defraud us; what evolving fraud tactics can be observed in recent years; how can fraud survivors be better supported after being victimized and what measures can better protect individuals. Keynote speaker Ayleen Charlotte described her experience with the 'Tinder Swindler'. Excellent analysis of the rapidly multiplying forms of fraud with expertise and experience from the UK, where fraud protection is a priority, accounts for 43% of crime; expert fraudsters using sophisticated emotional and psychological techniques - romance fraud, financial fraud, identity fraud. It is important to stop the victim blaming, the shame cycle; building collective awareness...
- **Strengthening Public-Private Partnership in Combating Non-Consensual Intimate Image Abuse:** Organized by the United Kingdom and Norway with the support of Canada, the Philippines and Microsoft. This event described the new global strategy to prevent this abuse through a wide public-

private partnership including national institutions, civil society, academia and private sector in partnership with StopNCII.org

- **Taking Out the Trash: Countering Illegal Hazardous Waste Trafficking at Borders:** Organized by the UNODC Passenger and Cargo Border Programme with the support of Norway.

- **The Road to the 15th UN Crime Congress: Civil Society Engagement in Shaping Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Responses:** Organized by the UNODC Civil Society Unit with the support of Albania, Canada and the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

- **Crime Prevention House Rules to Integrate Immigrant Communities for Peace and Justice: Challenges and the Way Forward:** Organized by the Universal Peace Federation.

- **Firearms Related Gender-Based Violence Against Women: Legislative Approaches to Enhance Prevention and Responses:** Organized by the International Association of Democratic Lawyers with the support of Brazil, South Africa, the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, and others.



- **Civil Society and the UN Reform: From Domestic to International Justice and Back:** Organized by the European Public Law Organization with the support of the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, GI-TOC and the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development.

- **Enhancing Multilateral and Multi-Stakeholder Responses to Crimes that Affect the Environment:** Organised by Gi-TOC, supported by France, the EU, Germany, Norway, Kenya, Peru, Colombia.

- **It Takes a Network to Defeat a Network: Empowering Civil Society Networks to Support Member States in Preventing Transnational Organized Crime:** Organized by the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs with the support of the Group of Friends of Multistakeholder Participation in UNODC Matters the UNODC Civil Society Unit, and others. This side event demonstrated the vital role of civil society networks and alliances in the fight against organized crime. It included the launch of the newly established Asia Regional Civil Society Network (NET4U Asia) after NET4U America and NET4U Africa. The Ambassador of Burkino Faso gave an inspiring talk. She had been sold at age 19; She said that she is 'very close to civil society and that we can count on her' as a bridge between civil society and the state.

Obviously it is not possible in a report like this to go into much detail on these different subjects but for those interested, please contact the undersigned.

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