

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN
ALLIANCE INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES

IAW website: <http://www.womenalliance.com>

Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities
Droits Égaux - Responsabilités Égales

IAW NEWSLETTER – April 2006, nr. 3



Equal Rights

Dear IAW members,

We start this newsletter with news from CSW, ECOSOC, CEDAW and the new Human Rights Council. You will find some very outspoken opinions about corruption, which is called: a cancer - a crime against the poor - a barrier to reach the MDGs..

There is news about HIV/AIDS and women's health, the 4th World Water Forum and a great new website (an international legal search engine), which will certainly be of interest for women in politics.

Please read: 'A literate woman makes a literate family', because there are 39 million illiterate adults in Latin America and the Caribbean alone. A successful method for teaching reading and writing can be adapted to different languages and cultures.

Congratulations to IAW Affiliate 'The Greek League for Women's Rights'. They have new offices, made possible by a generous donation of Hon. President Professor Alice Yotopoulos-Marangopoulos

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Women remain politically underrepresented

Despite major gains, women bear disproportionate share of poverty burden

While women had posted major gains in terms of educational achievement, political representation and economic viability, the goal of gender equality was elusive, as women continued to bear a disproportionate share of the burden of poverty and underrepresentation in political life, the Commission on the Status of Women was told on the first and second of March, as it continued its general discussion.

More than 50 speakers took the floor to describe national efforts aimed at achieving targets, set at the 1995 Beijing Conference. Here are three of the best: Iceland, Norway and Australia.

Iceland: reporting on the results of trend-setting legislation, Iceland's Minister of Social Affairs noted that, following the enactment of **paternity leave legislation** in 2003, some 90 per cent of Icelandic fathers had utilized that right and taken paternity leave. Men must shoulder their responsibility and take an active part in the promotion of gender equality in all areas.

Norway: describing the introduction of groundbreaking legislation in Norway, that country's Minister of Children and Equality said her country had introduced a 40 per cent requirement for the underrepresented sex on company boards in the private sector. As of 1 January, Norway's 500 privately owned public limited companies would have two years to comply with the new amendment or face sanctions. **Parity** had already been achieved in Norway's Government, which consisted of 50 per cent women and 50 per cent men.

Australia: Australia's representative, however, noted that women had achieved a high level of representation in Australia's Government without the use of quotas. Indeed, the number of women in Australia's national, state and territory parliaments was the highest it had ever been, ranging between 27 and 43 per cent, and included six indigenous women. In recent years, four of the state and territory governments had been led by women and three had women opposition leaders. The Government did not operate a system of quotas to achieve equal participation of women in decision-making roles, but rather, was committed to the merit principle and to providing targeted support to create an environment that enabled women to **compete equitably on merit.**

Also speaking were the representatives of France, Guyana, Botswana, Barbados, Iraq, Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Ghana, Finland, Burkina Faso, Azerbaijan, Mexico, Ethiopia, Malaysia, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Niger, Nepal, Greece, Angola, Kenya, Peru, Dominican Republic, Ukraine, Japan, Russian Federation, United States, Republic of Korea, Syria, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Chile, Canada, Sudan, Philippines, Cuba, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Zambia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Viet Nam, India, Tuvalu, Yemen and Papua New Guinea.

You can read it all on <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/50sess.htm>

INTERNATIONAL LAW - ON THE INTERNET

International Legal Search Engine - International Rules per Country

A International Legal Search Engine enables everybody, including those who do not have any legal background, to easily access to the international rules binding a specific country. With over 250 international conventions analyzed article by article, it provides many useful functions, to be found on www.whatconvention.org/ In order to access the database, you just need to select: a country, a topic or a theme, a date (the current date is chosen as the default date)

The Legal Search Engine takes into consideration the dates of ratifications, the dates of entry into force and the possible reservations issued by the Contracting States. It makes the search easier, quicker and more systematic. Besides, it allows non-jurists to easily learn what international rights and obligations are binding their country of residence.

To launch a search, [click here](http://www.whatconvention.org/index.php?page=rechercher) (<http://www.whatconvention.org/index.php?page=rechercher>)

It also provides a short [introduction to international public law](#), as well as with a selection of some [key international conventions](#)

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL - OPENING

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) must be strengthened if the Organization was to successfully implement the decisions and goals set forth during last year's World Summit, several speakers stressed as the Council opened its 2006 organizational session, on the Preparatory Meeting on 4-5 April 2006.

Ali Hachani (Tunisia), who was elected as President of ECOSOC for 2006, stressed that the United Nations had yet to fully promote social progress and improved living standards. He added that the theme of this year's high-level debate -- *promotion of employment and decent work for all* -- would be particularly relevant to the forthcoming General Assembly's high-level dialogue on international migration and development.

Also during the meeting, the Council elected its Vice-Presidents, Gediminas Šerkšnys (Lithuania) from the Eastern European States; Léo Mérorès (Haiti) from the Latin American and Caribbean States group; Hjálmar W. Hannesson (Iceland) from the Western European and other States group; and Prasad Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka) from the Asian States group, by acclamation.

More on <http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/>

ECOSOC - on 24th of April 2006

In 2006 the Economic and Social Council will hold its 9th special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods Institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. This year's meeting will be an important opportunity to build on some of the concrete development initiatives agreed upon at the [2005 World Summit](#).

The Spring meetings have proved a useful mechanism for deepening the dialogue between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and for strengthening their partnership for achieving the development goals agreed at the global conferences of the past 15 years, including the [Millennium Development Goals](#): <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

Millennium Development Goals - Corruption is a Barrier

The Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Mr. Dauda Toure has stated that corruption remains a critical barrier to achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

According to him until the canker is routed out completely, the UN's target of lifting half of the

world's population out of extreme poverty and deprivation will remain elusive.

The UN in September 2000 declared the achievement of eight development goals by 2015 as a way of giving meaning to its own charter on fundamental human rights and the equality of persons and nations. Sadly, the world is only nine years away from 2015, yet many states are [nowhere](#) near meeting these goals.

Corruption - a crime against the poor

Speaking in Accra at a Regional workshop on advancing Anti-Corruption Conventions in Africa, Mr. Toure said that it is now a widely accepted fact that not only does corruption retard economic development, but it also contributes to political and social instability by undermining democratic institutions.

He pointed out that corruption erodes the foundations of democratic institutions by distorting electoral processes, perverting the rule of law and creating bureaucratic quagmires. Besides, it breeds impunity, dilutes public integrity and violates human rights. Indeed, Mr. Toure equates corruption as a crime against the poor.

Costly bribes - \$1 trillion every year

According to Mr. Toure, the World Bank quantifies that a total amount in excess of \$1 trillion per annum, more than ten times the total amount of development aid per year, is paid as bribes in every year. Similarly, money laundering remains the world's third largest business, estimated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) at about US\$ 500 billion per year. Meanwhile, the UNDP in its latest Human development Report, estimates that about US\$ 300 billion is needed to lift one billion people out of extreme poverty.

The Tax Justice Network for Africa (TJN), an international Non Governmental Organization fighting against tax evasion by wealthy individuals and corporate organizations, also estimates that a staggering \$11.5 trillion has been siphoned 'offshore' by wealthy individuals, and held in tax havens where they are shielded from contributing to government revenues.

Make the rich pay their taxes!

The TJN is of the view that taxing this wealth would have far outweighed any realistic amount of foreign aid from the developed world and that if the income from this offshore wealth was even to be taxed at the moderate rate of 30%, the resulting revenue - around \$255 billion annually - could finance the United Nations Millennium Project in its entirety. Put simply, making the rich pay their due taxes could immediately fund measures to halve world poverty.

Mr. Toure announced that supporting Anti-corruption institutions and concerned Civil Society Organizations in their efforts at curbing corruption was high on the agenda of the UNDP in its five year plan for 2006-2010.

Ratifying UNCAC - United Nations Convention Against Corruption

The workshop brought together 13 countries from West Africa, of which only six are said to have ratified the UNCAC. Four other countries have signed the UNCAC but are yet to ratify.

The African Union (AU) on its part has put in place the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption and Related Offences (AU Convention) as a means to fighting the canker.

By Jonathan Adabre. More on: http://www.ghanaweb.com/public_agenda/article.php?ID=5028

CEDAW

The Committee will hold its thirty-fifth session at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 15 May to 2 June 2006. Countries Reporting Bosnia/Herzegovina - Malaysia - [St Lucia](#) - Turkmenistan - Cyprus - Guatemala - Malawi - Romania

Convenor of the IAW Commission on Political Rights and CEDAW: Lene Pind

Australia and CEDAW

The WRANA delegation is back from New York. It delivered two statements to the CEDAW Committee. Leanne Miller presented a statement on Indigenous women's issues and Therese Sands presented a general statement on women's issues. The Committee asked quite a few questions in response to our statements. Have a look at the girls doing a trial run of delivering the statement on <http://www.wrana.org.au/>

The CEDAW Committee has released the Concluding Comments for Australia: look at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw34/concludingcomments/Australiacc.pdf>

Human Rights Commissioner Louise Arbour said the Council was more than a "new and improved" Commission on Human Rights, the body it is replacing. The new body boasted some significant features, including that candidates for membership would have to make commitments on human rights; elected members would be first in line for scrutiny under a universal periodic review of their human rights records; and members that committed gross and systematic violations of human rights could be suspended. Members would also commit to cooperate with the Council and its various mechanisms.

Election of members

The way members of the Council are to be elected also represented a major improvement over the Commission, the High Commissioner continued. Election to the Council would require an absolute majority of UN member States: of the 191 members, at least 96 must support a state's membership by secret ballot. This threshold was much higher than the 28 or fewer votes that could get a country membership in the Commission and would allow countries to block the election of egregious rights violators.

Election and first meeting

The elections are scheduled to take place in the General Assembly on 9 May. The Council will hold its first meeting on 19 June. The 17 countries to have announced their candidacies on the website are: Algeria, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Ukraine, Latvia, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Peru, Nicaragua, Germany, Greece, Portugal and Switzerland. Please look at www.un.org/ga/60/elect/hrc/.

NGOs

The UN Commission on Human Rights concluded its 60 years of work in a three-hour session on 27 March, 2006, at its UN Geneva headquarters. The HRC Expanded Bureau decided that there would only be one NGO statement permitted. Here is that statement on: <http://www.ngocongo.org>

HEALTH - HIV/AIDS - AND WOMEN

AIDS Summit in New York at the end of May 2006

On 5th June 2006, it will be 25 years since AIDS was discovered. A disease that was first noticed as the cause of unexpected infections among gay men in the USA has morphed into one of the make-or-break global problems of our age, undermining not just the health prospects of entire societies but also their ability to reduce poverty, promote development and maintain national security. Yet, today there is more reason for optimism about our ability to succeed against the epidemic than ever before. Things that seemed wishful thinking have become reality.

Progress - antiretroviral treatment.

Forty heads of state or government now personally lead their country's efforts on AIDS. Where developing countries invested just \$300 million on fighting AIDS a decade ago, by last year this had risen to over \$8 billion. Over a million people in developing countries are living normal, longer lives because of hard-won progress in expanding access to antiretroviral treatment. And through committed leadership and stepped up efforts, more and more countries – including some of the world's poorest – are turning the tide on their epidemics. In 2006 we must accelerate this momentum of progress.

Effective programmes

Our collective priority must be to make 2006 the year implementation accelerates—we must make the money work by bringing effective HIV programmes within the reach of everyone. At the World Summit last September, leaders of both developing and rich countries committed themselves to working together so as to get close to universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support programmes by 2010 – a critical stepping stone to halting the epidemic by 2015, as set out in the Millennium Development Goals.

Five year follow-up

The AIDS Summit in New York at the end of May 2006—a five year follow-up to the historic UN General Assembly Special Session on AIDS in 2000— will help rally concrete commitments for moving towards universal access.

At the heart of UNAIDS' commitment are the people we work for—the women, men and children living with and affected by HIV. Together the ten UNAIDS cosponsors are committed to making the money work for those who are in the most need today — while ensuring longer term solutions are in

place for tomorrow.

By Peter Piot. Read more on <http://www.unaids.org/en/mediacentre/newsletter/>

Global Coalition on Women and AIDS

The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS (GCWA) is a worldwide alliance of civil society groups, networks of women with HIV and AIDS, governments and UN organizations. The Coalition works at global, regional and national levels to highlight the impact of AIDS on women and girls and mobilize actions to enable them to protect themselves from HIV and receive the care and support they need. The GCWA was launched by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS), the main advocate for global action on HIV and AIDS.

Nearly 7,000 are newly infected each day

Almost 20 million women and girls worldwide are living with HIV. Nearly 7,000 are newly infected each day. These figures need not be so high. In the months to come, the Coalition will be calling for action around women and AIDS issues within the global policy arena and to affect real change for women and girls on the ground in the developing world.

For example: economic security for women ... Read more on <http://womenandaids.unaids.org/>

Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights of Women

Like we learned during the IAW meeting in Burkina Faso, there is sadly no acceleration of progress toward meeting internationally agreed reproductive and sexual health targets. Core aspects of the WHO Strategy to this effect like improving antenatal, perinatal, postpartum and newborn care; providing high-quality services for family planning; eliminating unsafe abortion; combating sexually transmitted infections including HIV, reproductive tract infections, cervical cancer and other gynaecological morbidities, are not adequately dealt with.

Promo Femmes

This became clear during the seminar IAW member Promo Femmes organised in Ouagadougou in November 2005. Dr. Azara Louguet-Bamba from the local WHO office in her keynote address spoke, among other, of a new approach to quantify ill health and maternal deaths in terms of lost chances for economic and social development. The aim: to improve the low status of women which contributes to the rising rates of female HIV infection, and to activate political will for neglected areas such as family planning.

These issues were taken up by a working group with the focus on working for change including changes of attitude in a male-dominated society. Educational materials in French addressing young people of both sexes with messages conceived in collaboration with young Burkinabè were presented and distributed by Family Care International. Go to www.repro-ado.org/publications

Do Calcium Pills work ?

TIME, March 27, 2006 informed on the latest studies on 'Do Calcium Pills Work?' which are part of the giant U.S. Women's Health Initiative. The WHI Study Results: Calcium and Vitamin D Supplements Offer Modest Bone Improvements, No Benefits for Colorectal Cancer.

According to the study the supplements provide in healthy postmenopausal women a modest benefit in preserving bone mass and prevent hip fractures in certain groups including older women, but do not prevent other types of fractures or colorectal cancer. While generally well tolerated, the supplements were associated with an increased risk of kidney stones.

See more on www.whi.org/findings and www.nhlbi.nih.gov/new/press/06-02-14.htm

IAW Convenor of the Health Commission; Gudrun Haupter

UN Population Fund sets up office to promote Health in Gulf Region

New York, Mar 31 2006: The United Nations Population Fund has set up its first sub-regional office to serve the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates - providing scientific and technical assistance to improve social, health and cultural welfare.

UNFPA considers its cooperation with the GCC ministries of health as essential for the well-being of the citizens of these countries, particularly for the promotion of the health of women and their families," agency Executive Director Thoraya Ahmed Obaid said at the opening ceremony in Muscat, Oman, earlier this week.

The opening of the new office "is a reaffirmation of the role that UNFPA can play in assisting the

GCC countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by contributing to the quality of people's lives." More on <"<http://www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=763>">

UN World Water Development Report

Entitled "Water, a shared responsibility," the UN World Water Development Report, a triennial study, is the most comprehensive assessment to date of freshwater resources and was released ahead of fourth World Water Forum to be held in Mexico City from 16 to 22 March.

Although unevenly distributed, the world has plenty of water but mismanagement, limited resources and environmental changes mean that almost one fifth of the planet's population still lacks access to safe drinking water and 40 per cent do not have basic sanitation, according to a new United Nations report.

It notes that 1.1 billion people still lack access to safe drinking water, and 2.6 billion lack basic sanitation, over half of them living in China and India.

According to the report, only 12 per cent of countries have so far developed integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans, although the 2002 UN Summit on Sustainable Development called for such projects to be in place by 2005.

Financial resources for water are stagnating

Total official development assistance (ODA) to the sector has averaged some \$3 billion in recent years with an additional \$1.5 billion allocated in non-concessional lending. Only about 12 per cent of these funds, however, reach those most in need, and only 10 per cent is directed to support development of water policy, planning and programmes.

Read more on <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=17746&Cr=&Cr1=>

www.unesco.org, www.unep.org and <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N15411407.htm>

Convenor of the IAW Commission on Environment: Ida Kurth

EDUCATION - Women Key to Literacy in the Home

"A literate woman makes a literate family," says Cuban teacher Leonela Relys, who created a successful method for teaching reading and writing, which can be adapted to different languages and cultures. "This literacy programme can be contextualised in countries as different and far apart as Bolivia, East Timor and New Zealand, because it's based on universal principles that any human being can understand."

Relys is the creator of the "Yes I can!" programme to teach basic literacy skills, which has been implemented, is currently being applied or is being used in pilot projects in 18 countries in Latin America and other regions with high illiteracy rates, according to Cuban officials.

Women

"Most illiterate people in the world are women, because of sexism, inequality, social discrimination, and the lack of employment opportunities. Because of all of these, it is our principle to focus on women first," she said.

A joint study by UNESCO and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), published in February 2005, indicated that there are **39 million illiterate adults** in this region, most of whom live in rural areas, belong to ethnic minorities, or are poor.

Patricia Grogg IPS. Read more on: <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=32764>

Convenor of the IAW Education Commission: Meena Pimpalpure

Where is the money for women's rights?

It seems that there are too few interested funders, with too little money, to support existing women's rights organizations and initiatives. Is it that women's rights groups are not bold enough in their fundraising strategies? Is it that donors simply don't understand the urgency and importance of this work? What has really been happening in terms of funding for women's rights organizations in the last ten years and what have been the driving forces behind those trends?

This report is the result of an action research initiative launched by AWID to explore precisely those questions and to give insights into possible strategies for changing the existing funding landscape so that more resources are made available to women's rights organizations.

Spanish, French and Arabic versions of the report will be available soon! On <http://www.awid.org/>

An **excellent newsletter** with European news is the newsletter of WIDE (EU trade policy - social and gender justice - undermining environmental sustainability) on <http://www.eurosur.org/wide/home.htm>

COURAGEOUS WOMEN

World Press Freedom Day

UNESCO/Guillermo Cano Press Freedom Prize 2006 awarded to Lebanese journalist May Chidiac
On the recommendation of an international jury of media professionals, UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura designated Lebanese journalist May Chidiac, winner of the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize 2006.

May Chidiac is a popular television presenter, whose news bulletins and Sunday programmes - *Naharkoum Saïd* and *Bonjour* – on LBC (Lebanese Broadcasting Corp.) are among the most widely followed in Lebanon. Ms Chidiac's popularity owes as much to her professionalism as to her direct and open approach in a country traumatized by years of war.

The victim of a car bomb attack on 25 September 2005, Ms Chidiac had one of her hands and her left leg amputated. The tragedy shook Lebanese opinion, which came to see the journalist as a symbol of freedom of expression. The attack against her closely resembled the fatal attack on Samir Kassir, a journalist from the daily *An Nahar*, five months earlier. Another similar attack in December 2005 targeted the editor of *An-Nahar*, Gebran Tueni. May Chidiac was proposed as a candidate for prize by the Lebanese minister for culture.

The UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize is awarded annually on World Press Freedom Day (3 May). The 2006 prize, worth US \$25,000, is financed this year by the Guillermo Cano Foundation, James and David Ottaway - respectively a former reporter from the Washington Post and a former Chairperson of the World Press Freedom Committee - and UNESCO.

A personal note from Italy

This is voting day here in Italy. There are many courageous women here in Italy.. resistance fighters who still in their old age continue to work politically or in the media. Yet, another courageous Italian woman has emerged in Sicily for this election. She is Rita Borsellino, the sister of the equally courageous prosecutor, Paolo who was assassinated in 1982 along with five bodyguards. They were all murdered by the Cosa Nostra branch of the Mafia in Sicily. Her courage shines through because as the sister of slain anti-mafia judge and at the age of 60 SHE HAS DECIDED TO ENTER POLITICS for the first time and is running for Governor of Sicily.

She says that " the voters should not see this as a choice between a pro-Mafia of an anti-Mafia candidate - I don't want is to be seen that way. That would be a simplification. I'm not just anti. I'm for something ...for positive action that can improve society. There is a lack of ethics, of profound basic values, that goes beyond the Mafia question"

Happy Easter to you all, Bettina

Bettina Corke is representing IAW in the UN Food and Agricultural Commission (FAO).

Note

This time, for technical reasons, we are sending the IAW newsletter as an attachment only. If any of you cannot open the attachment, please write to Joke Sebus, <iaw.newsletter@inter.nl.net> and I will try to find a solution.

Also, please advise Pat Richardson if you know of any IAW members or affiliate/associate organisations with an e-mail address.

IAW Newsletter / News Flash	: Joke Sebus	< iaw.newsletter@inter.nl.net >
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