

**INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN
ALLIANCE INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES**

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

**Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities
Droits Égaux - Responsabilités Égales**

IAW NEWSLETTER – November 2005, nr. 9



Equal Rights

Dear IAW members,

This time you will find contributions from three IAW Convenors: Heide Schütz on Peace and Security and Gudrun Haupter on Health; also Bettina Corke, IAW's representative at FAO, on Agriculture and Food. These items were discussed intensely at the excellent seminar and open plenary sessions in Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso.

Compliments to the organising talents of dynamic Regional IAW Vice-President Clementine Ouédraogogo who is Coordinator of Promo-Femmes, IAW Associate in Burkina Faso, and Dr. Susanne Riveles, an expert in development from the US. The IAW Board meeting was also very successful - all detailed in IWNews.

One thing we must mention here is that Hilary Paddon, who has been the very dedicated Editor of the French section of IWNews for 25 years, is going to conclude her editing work. We thank her warmly for all she has done for IAW. At the same time, we welcome her successor, Cécile Ouédraogo from Burkina Faso. Here is one of three stanzas from a poem by Cécile: Femmes du Burkina, Marchons

*De nos villes petites ou grandes nous sortirons
Avec ou sans papier nous parlerons
Contra la pauvreté et surtout les violences
Nous irons présenter nos doléances*

Commissions – driving IAW policies and the Action Programme

Women, Peace and Security – an African perspective : Heide Schütz

As convenor of the newly reestablished Peace Commission I was invited to participate in the IAW Board meeting in Burkina Faso. When I learned that there would also be the chance to participate in the seminar “Women, Equality and Peace for a Sustainable Human Development“ I was even more thrilled because I had the strong feeling that I would meet African women from the region who are engaged in preventing war and building sustainable peace.

The first plenary session was attended by IAW representatives and 60 women from the region, including women from Ivory Coast (refugees), and from Togo and Niger. Translation from French and English was provided, thus an exchange of information and ideas was a great experience for all participants.

The highlights in my field of interest were the report of Nana Sidonie, president of 'teg taaba', the organisation of refugee women from Ivory Coast in Burkina Faso, and the input by Régina Tiens Bande, member of WANEP (West-African Network of Peacebuilding) on Women and Conflict. A very special experience was our meeting with the refugee women from 'teg taaba' in their housing area.

Since war and the results of war are so relevant and a matter of daily life in the region, peace is never an abstract thing. There is an urgent need and condition for survival and sustainable development. I was lucky to be able to meet women from the region who work for sustainable peace, to discuss matters of common interest and invite them to become members of the IAW Peace Commission. We are very happy to welcome Régina Tiens Bande from West Africa. Horeya Megahed (Egypt) and Susanne Riveles (USA) are also going to participate in the work of the Commission. (Susanne was a wonderful interpreter and facilitator during the seminar.)

The Commission decided to start with three topics: peace building, peace education and promotion of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on “Women, Peace and Security”, which was passed in 2000 when Namibia held the presidency of the Security Council. It is binding international law for all member states of the UN: The resolution e.g. demands that:

“member states ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict“ (article 1)

“all parties in conflict respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls (article 9)

“take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse” (article 10), to “put an end to impunity” (article 11).

Specific information on different subjects will be available later on the IAW website.

At the end of the seminar African women, with including Felicité Koublanou, head of IAW affiliate La Colombe from Togo and Suna Diallo, head of IAW affiliate ONG-SAPHTA from Niger, founded an important new network: “*West African Centre on Gender and Conflict*” Together with their main resources of a lifelong experience of violent conflicts and their strong engagement to promote sustainable peace, the UN Resolution 1325 will be a helpful tool to support them in their struggle.

Heide Schütz, IAW Commission Convenor on Peace

Health is a Fundamental Human Right: Gudrun Haupter

The *Action Programme* of the IAW affirms that the right to health is a fundamental human right. For our Commission on Health this means first of all that women’s health rights are central to our efforts. We all know that the road from recognition of these rights to their implementation for all girls and women is long and thorny. The Commission has several resource members, including two in African countries, one of whom is our Burkinabe host Clémentine Ouedraogo.

The IAW has official relations with WHO which also means we have a joint 3-year work plan. In this context let me briefly illustrate the leading role WHO has taken on several issues regarding women’s health by giving two examples:

1. The Department of Gender, Women and Health has a focus on influencing the WHO Secretariat, as well as the Regional and Country Offices to **adopt a gender perspective in all health matters where this is appropriate**. We believe that this will, in the medium and long term, increase the visibility of women’s health needs, provide impetus and have important beneficial effects on women’s health and their status.

2. The World Health Assembly adopted in 2004 a '**Strategy on reproductive health to accelerate progress towards the attainment of international development goals, especially those related to the MDGs on maternal and child health and on HIV/AIDS**'. Access to quality family planning and other core issues of reproductive health and sexual health are considered to be effective means for reaching the internationally agreed goals including the reduction of poverty. My Commission has seized many opportunities to point out the IAW position in matters regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The IAW Commission is also currently working on the following issues:

Women and tobacco; Action-oriented research on health, especially on neglected groups and issues; Trends which endanger basic health care delivery to all – keywords: privatisation and globalisation.

Finally, if your organisation plans a seminar on women’s health issues, do not hesitate to ask WHO for relevant publications and/or ask your WHO office for a speaker.

Gudrun Haupter, Convenor of the IAW Commission on Health and Main Representative at WHO.

More and more Hungry People than ever before

Bettina Corke’s presentation to the plenary session in Burkina Faso

Since the First World Food Summit in 1996 to the present day, there are more and more hungry people than ever before. In 2002 an NGO 'Forum for Food Sovereignty - a Right for All' was held, in parallel to the official FAO 2002 Review of the "*World Food Summit; five years later*".

An NGO Forum Report was presented to all the Ministers and Heads of State present at the June 2002 FAO Summit meeting. It stated that:

"unfortunately the policies and actions prescribed by the World Food Summit - have undercut the livelihoods and the very existence of peasants, agricultural workers, fisherfolks....and increased their food insecurity, marginalisation and displacement."

The Member States of FAO have allowed the transnationals to enter into the implementation of the World Food Summit Goals, programmes and projects. These transnationals are interested in cash

export crops, food aid and genetically modified agriculture. Hence FAO is promoting export cash cropping, instead of improved domestic crops for home consumption. FAO, under the guidance of its Member States, is promoting incorrect land use and permitting the taking-out of land for agriculture. It is permitting the use of pesticides, genetically modified seeds and allowing farmers to lose their control over seeds and the organic traditional ways of farming. Food security, as the NGO Forum in 2002 so rightly stated, cannot be achieved in this manner. This approach, as all of you know very well, has serious consequences for women farmers in Africa, who are responsible for 80% of all the food grown for home consumption.

Questions, comments and responses

You are speaking very much to us and to our concerns. This is an agricultural country. We work hard. Women often do not own the land, we see that our young people are becoming sick from working in the fields and working in the fields where pesticides are being used. Those of us who do not work in export crop farming – grow food where we can – process the food. But we feel very much alone. Women farmers and the poor women in the rural areas are without the ways and means to overcome these problems.

Sadly it is so. The possibilities to change in a democratic way, the terrible condition in which we find ourselves in have since the 1990s been greatly reduced. Women and the issues of women no longer have any concrete points of entry into National budgets or into National plans. They do not feature in the National budget or in the budgets of Ministries of Agriculture.

What we used to have, more especially in Africa, Women's National Machineries have been eliminated. The elimination of our National Machineries and the dramatic reduction in funds of the public sector for education, health and sound social development was done in the name of intensified industrialisation and corporatisation of agriculture, deregulation and privatisation.

Consequently, we no longer have the possibility of training and upgrading our women farmers or providing education or health programmes to our women in the rural areas. Small scale farmers in Africa - the majority of whom are women - are in a desperate state. The New Programme for African Development (NEPAD) has declared recently that Agriculture is to be its main priority. So perhaps, this is an opportunity for our women farmers and for our women living in the rural areas to participate in this new African regional organisation.

You made reference to NEPAD. I know that no women were involved to any great extent with it. Could you tell me a bit more about your experience with it? I would also like to say that in some cases Women's Bureaux were not working very well or effectively either.

I know that the Ministers of Agriculture of Africa met in 2003 and they stated that Agriculture should be considered as a priority for the newly formed NEPAD organisation. I take your point that no women were involved in the setting up of NEPAD. This is true. But because it is a new organisation, perhaps we should try to see if we can fully participate in its decision making and more particularly so in relationship to agriculture and rural development given that they - the men - have declared it to be a priority. Whatever working groups are set up within NEPAD - for agriculture - and for rural- peri-urban development, we as women and as NGOs should be there as active participants and decision-makers. Whether or not it is a organisation ready to accept change, indeed transformation, has yet to be seen.

I would like to support all the points brought forward and to add one or two more. Pesticides is a real health hazard for our women and for our young people working in the fields. We are also having more and more refugees coming in from Côte d'Ivoire and other places who need food and shelter, most of whom are widows who with their children have witnessed terrible things. Then again, because of the deaths of mothers and fathers from AIDS, we have orphans, young women, grandmothers trying to take care of the remaining family members. They are poor, without housing, without land, without any family structures because of the adult death toll of AIDS, hunger and malnutrition. This must change. Life must become better for our women and I am happy that IAW is taking up the struggle for justice and food security at FAO.

Bettina Corke, IAW Representative at FAO

The European Parliament has approved far-reaching legislation which will lead to the safety testing of thousands of chemicals used in everyday products - REACH

The law, called Reach - Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals - would create one database including all chemicals used in the EU. Employers say it will impose heavy costs and cause firms to flee Europe. Members of European Parliament (MEPs) also included a measure obliging firms to replace hazardous chemicals with safe ones, whenever possible.

The regulation has to be approved by national governments before it can become law, and may return to the parliament for another vote next year.

Biggest Lobbying Campaigns ever in Brussels

Reach in its original form would have led to about 30,000 substances - found in everything from cars to computers to children's toys - being tested for their impact on health and the environment.

It has been intensely controversial, prompting some of the biggest lobbying campaigns ever seen in Brussels, with industry on one side and unions, and health and environmental groups (also the European Women's Lobby) on the other.

All of the 30,000 chemicals will still need to be registered, but up to two-thirds of them may be exempted from tests. Instead, a new European Chemicals Agency, based in Helsinki, will decide which of these chemicals used in low volumes are risky enough to have to pass through the testing procedure.

Burden of proof on business

Businesses wanting to use the most dangerous chemicals will have to get special authorisation from the agency. The European Parliament also voted for improved labelling of products made with chemicals thought to be harmful. Reach puts the burden of proof, and a "duty of care", on business.

The tests would have to be carried out in phases over 11 years, starting with the most dangerous substances, and those used in the largest volumes.

Unbelievable Pressure

Italian Socialist MEP Guido Sacconi, who steered Reach through the parliament's environment committee, said the vote gave Europe the "strongest protection in the world" from dangerous chemicals. He added that "unbelievable pressure" was brought to bear on MEPs by big businesses.

Read more on: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4444550.stm>

Ida Kurth, Convenor of the IAW Commission Environment & Sustainable Development, can tell us more about new chemical testing legislation and the approval by national governments in the coming year.

Action European Women's Lobby

The European Women's Lobby urged women to send *letters to members of the European Parliament*.

The chemical body burden of a woman is passed on by each generation, directly from mother to child! This happens already before the birth as some chemicals can cross the blood-brain barrier or the placenta. The most dangerous chemicals to human health and the environment can be summarized as chemicals of very high concern, because of their hazardous properties. They accumulate in the body and cannot break down, they are toxic, disrupt the hormone system, cause cancer or are able to alter our DNA. Some of them are also toxic to reproduction.

This group of substances is well researched and a variety of negative health effects have been observed ranging from learning disabilities, asthma and allergies to infertility and cancer.

Website EWL on: <http://www.womenlobby.org/>

The Focus on Africa continues

Smile, Woman of Africa, Smile!

November 2005 holds marks two important events for African women. The 25th of November marks the start of the **16 Days of Gender Activism Against Violence**, an international campaign meant to raise awareness about gender violence, strengthen the work of local organisations and demonstrate the solidarity of women around the world.

Incorporating the International Day Against Violence Against Women (November 25) and International Human Rights Day (December 10), the goal of the campaign is to link violence against women to the fact that it is a human rights violation.

November 25th is also especially important for African women, as it is the day that the **Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa** comes into force. Having been ratified by the requisite 15 African countries, this extremely important and progressive treaty has the potential to liberate and empower all

African women to know and utilise their rights.

More on <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=31039> on the article of A.N. Kithaka.

Liberia votes for Africa's Iron Lady to end years of civil war

She has swept floors as a waitress and graduated from Harvard. She has been imprisoned at home and exiled abroad. Now she is on the verge of making history.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, 67, is set to become not just Liberia's first elected female president - but the first in Africa, and one of a handful in the world. "I hope young girls will now see me as a role model that will inspire them," Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf said. "I certainly hope more and more of them will be better off, women in Liberia, women in Africa, I hope even women in the world."

With more than 99 per cent of the ballot counted from the 8 November runoff vote, Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf holds an apparently irreversible lead, with 60 per cent compared to 40 per cent for her football star opponent, George Weah, a former Chelsea and AC Milan player.

Mr Weah is contesting the poll, though international observers say it was fair. A winner is unlikely to be declared for several more days, while complaints are investigated.

Women

Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf wants women to make up at least 30 per cent of her own cabinet.

The widowed mother of four - also a grandmother of eight - said it was not easy climbing the career ladder in a male-dominated world. She has served as finance minister at home, and taken on top jobs at Citibank and the United Nations abroad.

Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf took on the country's most feared and powerful warlord, Charles Taylor in 1997 elections. Though she lost by a landslide, she rose to national prominence and earned the nickname, "Iron Lady".

Peace

Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf went on to say her biggest task as president would be to ensure the country's fragile peace - which is supported by 15,000 UN troops - remained intact. This would be done, she said, by providing a future for the nation's youth, many of whom carried out acts of extreme brutality as child soldiers during the civil war.

"We need to give guidance and assurances to the young people and that's what we are going to do: address their needs. We must get them into school; we must get them participating so that they will never be recruited for conflict again," she insisted.

Excerpts from an article by Todd Pitman and Bill Corcoran, New Scotsman

Send to us by IAW member Anjana Basu.

Read more on: <http://news.scotsman.com/index.cfm?id=2248122005>

Editor's note: *IANSAs welcomes this election saying that Ms Johnson Sirleaf is co-author of 'Women, War, Peace', the landmark 2002 report on women and armed conflict.*

International News and Happenings

UN Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

Will the UN Summit serve the People? That was the goal of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), part two of which is taking place in Tunis, North Africa. The first round of WSIS was held in Geneva in 2003. One example of the so-called 'digital divide' between the world's rich and poor: roughly the same number of people use the Internet in the world's eight economic giants as in the other nations combined - 429 million users in the former versus 444 million in the latter, says the United Nations.

Representatives of the world's governments agreed to leave control of the technology that runs the Internet - the most potent symbol of the 'information age' - in the hands of the United States and instead to hold talks on devolving that role to an international forum. But no binding powers were established for the new body.

November 2005 - read the article of Marty Logan on <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=31039>

WTO in Hong Kong

Two cotton proposals for Hong Kong conference discussed

Two new or modified proposals on cotton were outlined at the eighth Cotton Sub-Committee meeting on 18 November 2005: from the four African proponents (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali) and

from the EU. These include proposed actions for ministers to take at the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference next month. More on:

Four of the WTO's biggest players

The United States, the European Union, Brazil and India have met in London in the latest attempt to break the logjam in talks that began four years ago in Doha, Qatar. Sources close to the talks said the leading developing nations held the key to the success of the trade ministers' meeting in Hong Kong in mid-December. Mr Lamy hopes Brazil will show a willingness to open up markets in areas other than agriculture following offers by the United States and the European Union to cut their support for farmers. Brazil and other developing countries, big and small, have been unimpressed by proposals tabled by Washington and Brussels, believing they offer little or nothing in the way of fresh concessions.

EU in a tight spot

That puts the Europeans in particular in a tight spot. The EU trade commissioner, Peter Mandelson, is being assailed by developing countries and NGOs for not moving far enough on agriculture while being savaged by France and others for selling out Europe's farmers. He has made two offers on agriculture, both rejected as inadequate by developing countries.

More on http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tratop_e.htm

Disaster Prevention

Editor's note: We must express our sympathy with all those suffering in disaster areas around the world including the devastated areas in Pakistan. Looking through the internet we found this statement on Disaster Prevention from Jan Egeland, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator.

"These people did not need to lose their lives," Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland told a press conference in Geneva, where he is chairing a two-day meeting of the International Task Force for Disaster Prevention, bringing together all UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, and Member States.

"If we had had good early warning systems, much fewer would have died in the Indian Ocean tsunami. If we had had earthquake safe schools, hospitals and housing in Northern Pakistan, tens of thousands would not have lost their lives.

"If we had had better levees in New Orleans, those who lived in the lower lying parts of the city would not have had to see their lives devastated".

Mr. Egeland noted that it was primarily in the poorer South that the systems are dysfunctional. Some 95 per cent of all deaths caused by disasters occurred in developing countries even though natural hazards were evenly distributed between North and South and East and West. Losses were 20 times greater in the South than in the North.

Read more on <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=16649&Cr=disaster&Cr1=>

Small is Beautiful

2005 - UN International Year of Microcredit -

This week marks the official end of the United Nation's International Year of Microcredit. The aim of creating awareness about this sector of the banking and finance industry - where sums as low as \$50 are lent to poor entrepreneurs who would otherwise have difficulty accessing such facilities - seems to have worked.

Australia did a tremendous job

According to the UN's chief technical adviser to the International Year of Microcredit, Christina Barrineau, Australia did a "tremendous job" towards the development of the micro-finance industry. "It's an industry with tremendous potential," says Barrineau, who was formerly an investment banker and independent financial sector consultant before joining the UN in 2003. "We can track that micro-finance institutions have quite staggering growth rates of upwards of 25 to 30 per cent per annum." Barrineau says that it has been difficult to measure the gross value of micro-finance on a global scale because "central banks have not taken micro-finance seriously as part of the financial sector".

An industry coming to the fore?

Nevertheless, she estimates that about a billion people in the world have access to some kind of

financial micro-credit facility.

It's certainly an industry that's coming to the fore. Last week, eBay founder Pierre Omidyar and his wife Pamela announced a \$US100 million (\$136 million) gift of eBay stock to Tufts University in the United States to invest in international micro-finance.

*Excepts from an article by Valerie Khoo, November 12, 2005, The Sydney Morning Herald.
The website of Microcredit is to be found on <http://www.un.org/events/microcredit/>*

EVENTS - CONFERENCES - WEBSITES - BOOKS

Commission on the Status of Women

Registration online, no later than the end of December 2005. All documents of the 49th Session of CSW 2005, on <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw49/documents.html#fin>
IAW members who hope to attend the CSW, please advise Rosy Weiss iawpres@onemail.at

IAW International Meeting – Kuwait – April 22-28 2006

Put the dates in your diary and watch this space for more information.

International Human Rights Day on December 10 2005

Women in an Insecure World, Violence against Women, Facts, Figures and Analysis

Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. (DCAF)

Marie Vlachová and Lea BIASON (eds), DCAF, 2005. ISBN 92-9222-028-4

In his foreword, the Director of DCAF, Theodor H. Winkler, writes about the 'hidden Gendercide':

According to estimates by the UN, up to 200 million women and girls are demographically 'missing'. The euphemism hides one of the most shocking crimes against humanity. Given the biological norm of 100 new-born girls to every 103 new-born boys, millions more women should be living amongst us. If they are not, if they are 'missing', then they have been killed, or have died through neglect or mistreatment.

World Trade Organisation - Hong Kong Ministerial Conference

The Hong Kong Ministerial Conference scheduled to be held from 13 to 18 December 2005, is the highest authority in the World Trade Organization (WTO) structure and takes decisions on all matters under multilateral trade agreements.

More on <http://www.wtomc6.gov.hk/eng/home/welcome.html>

Note

To avoid misunderstanding, we always send the IAW Newsletter twice: 1) in the body of the e-mail, and 2) as an attachment, saved in Word 97 (changed). Both have exactly the same content. The only difference is, that the attachment has a better lay-out, so it will be easy for Affiliates to copy it and send it by post to IAW members without e-mail.

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 >
International Women's News	: Priscilla Todd	< iaw.iwnews@toddsec.com >
Membership Officer	: Pat Richardson	< iaw.membership@tsn.cc >
Treasurer	: Marieluise Weber	< marieluise.weber@web.de >