

# INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN

Equal Rights—Equal Opportunities  
Droits égaux—responsabilités égales



Newsletter

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*Dear members and subscribers.*

*In this issue we focus primarily on CSW 61. IAW was there with a parallel event, there was an important meeting with the new UN Secretary General and IAW expresses its concern at the shrinking space for NGOs at the UN.*

## **IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS:**

***It's time to pay your membership fee as an individual member of IAW.***

***You can pay the € 20.-/year in two different ways. By bank transfer and by using the donation button on [our website](#)***

Bank account:

Alliance Internationale des femmes

CH15 0900 0000 1488 7557 3 **for CHF**

CH96 0900 0000 9182 4969 4 **for EUR**

## ***Commission on the Status of Women***

Members of IAW went to attend the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Unfortunately IAW once more experienced that some of our members did not obtain a visa into the USA, and so could not attend the session. This applies, for instance, to our members in Zimbabwe. This is very regrettable.

By way of preparing for CSW, IAW submitted [a statement](#) on Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work

## **The IAW parallel event**

In the first week of CSW 2017 IAW hosted the parallel event **"Sexism's effect on women in the workplace - Examples and solutions from around the world."**

The panel consisted of three women who work with women's and girls' organisations in different parts of the world.

**Luci Chikowero** represented [Rozaria Memorial Trust Girls Clubs](#) in Zimbabwe.

**Cecilia M. Gastón** represented the [Violence Intervention Program](#) an organization working to end domestic violence against Latina victims in New York.



**Helena Gleesborg Hansen** represented the “[Stop Sexism](#)” project under the Danish Women’s Society.

Moderating the event was [Alexis Grenall](#), a political consultant working on economic justice issues and writes frequently about gender and power.

While each panelist expressed how they saw and experienced sexism in their individual organisation the debate quickly showed that the three organisations represented on the panel worked in very different areas. However, within the first few minutes it also became very clear that many of the issues the organisations were facing on an everyday basis were very much the same, in particular in regards to patriarchal structures limiting women and girls in their everyday lives and in regards to concrete sexist encounters with men.

[Alexis Grenall](#) was expert at getting the panel to describe in their own words the specific environment and setting of their own organisation, and at the same time showing that the sexist structures facing women in workplaces, formal and informal, are very similar in different parts of the world.

The event was livestreamed and can now be seen here:

<https://www.facebook.com/VIPmujeresNY/videos/10155132393856880/>

<https://www.facebook.com/VIPmujeresNY/videos/10155132430216880/>

### **Agreed conclusions**

**CSW 61** signed the agreed conclusions on March 24. [The document is available here](#)

[President Joanna Manganara has evaluated CSW61](#) - follow the link

### **NGOs meet UN Secretary General**

NGOs had invited the new Secretary General Antonio Guterres for a meeting “of open dialogue about our concerns.”

At the beginning of the meeting, [a letter was handed](#) to the Secretary General, in which the long tradition of cooperation between the UN and women’s NGOs was described and how women have supported the work of the UN over the years.

At the end of the letter it says:

*In turn, we ask the UN to strengthen its commitment and support so that feminist and women’s movements can continue to have a strong, multi-cultural voice at the United Nations and that women’s and girls’ rights continue to advance.*

The letter was signed by over 900 signatories in 85 countries.

Secretary General emphasized that one of his commitments is to ensure gender parity throughout the UN system by 2030. A roadmap to achieve this goal is being prepared.

[The meeting can be viewed here.](#)

NGO meeting UN S-G  
Antonio Guterres





**Congress in Cyprus  
20—20 October**

**Elections: Look for candidates for all positions on the board**



**IAW at the Council of Europe**

Read more about the meeting on [the IAW website](#)

## **Congress October 20—28 2017 in Nicosia, Cyprus**

Every three years IAW holds a congress. Participants are all members of IAW i. e. board members, conveners and members of commissions, international representatives, representatives of all member organizations, individual members as well as invited guests and observers.

Important issues on the agenda of Congress are the adoption of a new action programme and the election of a new board. The new board may consist of members of IAW who have already served for one term and would like to continue for another, but it is also the time to elect new members for the board for the coming three years.

So now is the time to look around. Members who are interested in a position on the Board can be candidates. We are looking for candidates for all positions on the Board. Candidates must be nominated by either a member organization or a group of 10 individual members.

Documents for the nomination process will be sent out later by Secretary General Regina Smit, but if you have suggestions already now, either because you wish to be a candidate yourself or know of others, contact Regina Smit, at [iawsec@womenalliance.org](mailto:iawsec@womenalliance.org)

## **IAW Changes Guards at the Council of Europe (CoE):**

*As of 1st January of this year Heleen Jansen will be the Main Representative of the International Alliance of Women at the Council of Europe and myself will be the second”.*

This was the message from Anje Wiersinga, main Representative of IAW at the Council of Europe.

For many years Anje travelled to Strasbourg to attend the meetings of CoE. There have been annual meetings and meetings of a number of committees. Among her important tasks was her position as chair of annual meetings of the INGO taskforce on “Including Gender Perspectives in Democratic and Political Processes particularly during and after Conflict” in Strasbourg and Paris. Similarly she has been facilitator of the annual meetings of the INGO Freely Constituted Equality Group (FCEG) in Strasbourg.

In one of her reports she wrote:

*“Dignity is used instead of Human Rights. However dignity is only one aspect out of the four mentioned by the UN Declaration of Human Rights and for some people does not include equality”.*

Anje will no doubt continue to work for women’s right. At CoE she continues as the Chair of the INGO Working groups.



*In 2013, at the IFUW conference in Istanbul, **Dr. Anje Wiersinga** from the Netherlands was awarded the Jans Gremee Award 2014 for her outstanding work in the Council of Europe for women all over the world. IFUW is International Federation of University Women, renamed in 2015 Graduate Women International.*



**Heleen Jansen**

*New First IAW Representative  
to the Council of Europe*

#### IAW at WHO



IAW thanks Anje for her tireless work for women!

**Heleen Jansen** is of Dutch nationality and lives in France. For over 25 years she worked as a professor of French and of teacher training in the Netherlands. She also was involved in student care and in health education. For the last 15 years she has been active as an author and editor-in-chief of new educational methods and materials, especially about democratic citizenship and human rights education.

She is vice-chair of the Dutch section of the AEDE, the European Teachers Association. As representative of the AEDE in the NGO Conference of the Council of Europe she has been an active member of the working group 'Gender Perspectives in Democratic and Political Processes' chaired by Anje Wiersinga. In January 2017 she commenced as the first representative of the IAW at the Council of Europe.

**Ursula Nakamura-Stoecklin** is a new IAW representative to WHO in Geneva.

Ursula is a nurse by education with special training in surgery. Throughout her career she has taken on further education and studies within nursing incl. management course. For the last ten years of her working life she was general director of a large nursing centre.

Ursula was co-president of adf/svf, Swiss member organization of IAW, 1989-1992 and 2012-2014).

Throughout all her professional life she was interested in issues of health in general and the health of women and children in particular.

Female genital mutilation, family planning, maternal death during childbirth, modern gynaecological techniques (PID, surrogacy etc.), effects of non-communicable diseases on women, exploitation of girls and women in the labour market etc. – WHO is dealing with all these health issues, and she looks forward to joining Seema at WHO in Geneva.

#### **News from international representatives**

*European Women's Lobby*

**Arina Angerman**, IAW representative to the European Women's Lobby, reports:

#### **Women in political decision-making**

As a result of national elections in the Netherlands (2017.03.15) three extra women gained seats in the House of Representatives! We had at least two inspiring campaigns:

'Vote for a Woman' - As a member of Vrouwenbelangen I supported Vote for a Woman with Aletta (Jacobs) Actions using a blog and other social media actions (in Dutch). The result of the elections was the representation of women in political decision-making in the House of Representatives went down to 36% = 54 women from 58 women in 2012 and 61 women in 2010. Three political parties now have zero women, and the biggest political party with 33 seats has 10 women (33%).

Action by European Women's Lobby EWL and among others IAW '**Rise up against violence**' and [sign the petition to the Council of EU Justice](#)



Ministers Please sign!

*‘‘Make Europe a safe place for all women and girls! We are calling on you to urgently ratify and implement broadly the Council of Europe convention to fight violence against women. Women and girls across Europe want to live a life free from violence and fear. Act now to make sure that the European Union takes concrete action to protect all women and girls from violence and actively fights this pervasive human rights violation.’’*

At this moment (170322.1700 CET) the petition has 60,690 signatures. Please take action today and sign this petition too.

You can read about WHY and what other (more than 25) civil society networks have joined the broad EU coalition to ratify the Istanbul Convention at <http://www.womenlobby.org/Factsheet-EU-ratification-of-the-Istanbul-Convention-A-vital-opportunity-to-end-7510?lang=en>



*Lyda Versteegen reports from a side event at the Human Rights Council*

### MAAT and the UPR

Report Lyda Versteegen’s interesting report about the work on [UPR by NGOs in Egypt](#)



*Arielle Wagenknecht, IAW representative at the UN in Geneva, has sent a report*

### International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation February 6 at WHO Headquarters in Geneva

[Click and read](#)

### International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM 2017 and FGM in India

*Mohinder Watson reports from Geneva*

*International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM 2017: Summary of high level panel discussion at the World Health Organisation and an article explaining why women with FGM in India need international support. A report by **Mohinder Watson** (Founder, Action on Child, Early and Forced Marriage*

and UN Representative, International Council of Women) and Aarefa Johari (Co-Founder Sahiyo).

The International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM 2017 was marked by a high level panel discussion in Geneva featuring UN officials including Ms Kate Gilmore, Deputy-High Commissioner for Human Rights, WHO and UNICEF-UNFPA representatives and the Ambassadors of Ethiopia, Norway and the Netherlands to the UN as well as a personal testimony from a young French woman born and raised in France who was taken to Mauritania for cutting. Read her story in the full PDF report below.

In a statement to mark International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation 2017, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women said:

*'The cutting and sewing of a young child's private parts so that she is substantially damaged for the rest of her life, has no sensation during sex except probably pain, and may well face further damage when she gives birth, is to many an obvious and horrifying violation of that child's rights. It is a kind of control that lasts a lifetime. It makes a mockery of the idea of any part being truly private and underlines the institutionalized way in which decisions over her own body have been taken from that girl—one of some 200 million currently'*

The report also shines the spotlight on FGM in India which is still relatively unknown as it is a hidden practice, but brave women such as Aarefa Johari have started to speak out...

*'Five years ago, when I first publicly spoke out about my experience of 'khatna' or female circumcision, India was barely on the map of countries known for the prevalence of Female Genital Cutting (FGC). At the time, few women in my Dawoodi Bohra community were willing to break the silence on this secretive practice, and those who did speak out remained anonymous.'*

Aarefa Johari and her Sahiyo co-founders are inviting you to help them fight against FGM in India by signing a petition to introduce a law against FGM in India. Details are given inside the report with a clickable link to the petition. Mohinder Watson would welcome any comments on the report, at [mohinderw@bluewin.ch](mailto:mohinderw@bluewin.ch)

The full report may be obtained from Mohinder Watson.

**IAW around the world**

**International Women's Day—March 8** was celebrated by IAW members throughout the world. Here are a few examples.

**Renée Gérard** reports from France:

*In Paris on March 8<sup>th</sup>, there was a very important national ceremony at top level at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to celebrate the SERMENT de PARIS (Oath of Paris),*

*The Oath of Paris is a declaration by the French Government reaffirming that economic empowerment is related to the enjoyment of human rights. The SERMENT de Paris reaffirms solemnly the commitment of the French government to protect women's rights as an integral part of all human rights.*

*The text insists on sexual and reproductive rights and on the right to security through combating all forms of violence against women including domestic*



From left:

Lucia Aviles, Fatou Bensouda,  
Kuljit Kaur, Irène Natividad

violence. The panel discussions focused on these topics, and I was impressed by the panel on violence with four outstanding speakers, a Spanish judge **Lucia Aviles** and **Fatou Bensouda**, "procureur" at the International Criminal Court in the Hague, who managed to get an African general whose army used rape as a weapon of war condemned for crimes against humanity. Another panelist was **Kuljit Kaur**, Indian activist, vice president of All Indian Women's Conference (**member of IAW**) and **Irène Natividad** lawyer and president of the Global Summit of Women, who both spoke passionately

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development Jean Mac AYRAULT gave the first address, Laurence Rossignol, minister in charge of family, children and women's rights gave a speech to open the meeting, and the President of the French Republic François Hollande came and was very attentive to the panel discussions and presented the OATH of Paris.

**The Women's Rights Movement of the Philippines** held a seminar.

These were the commitments to promote women's rights that came out of the seminar:

*The Philippines*

BENEFICIARIES	NEEDS	STRATEGY	EXPECTATIONS
Women in their active reproductive stage  Adolescence (Girls and Boys)	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Education	Education and Training Consciousness awareness  Conduct workshop on Deepening the Gender Dimension of Reproductive Health  Discuss various frameworks for gender analysis using reproductive health situations	Become knowledgeable and familiar to their rights in addressing sexual and reproductive health issues and situations.
Women and Girls	Legal Rights	Legal Rights Education	Become familiar to gender responsive and rights-based reproductive health care services in health care facilities

*India*

**Dr. Vijaya Lakshmi**, chair of WHI reports from a peace rally organized by her organization in collaboration with All India Women's Conference and IAW.

[Read more](#)

## Anne Pelagie, CEFAP– Ladies Circle, Reports from Cameroon:



Before the day proper, there are various activities ranging from sports competitions, arts and crafts exhibitions, gastronomy exhibitions featuring the rich cultural meals of the different ethnic groups in Cameroon and also portraying the byproducts of some of our food crops and as a means to demonstrate methods of conservation and preservation and an agricultural show for rural women.

In our organization this year, from 1<sup>st</sup> March to 8 March 2017, we have carried out several activities such as:

- Roundtable on the theme : “Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50:50 by 2030”
- Educative talks
- Live Debate in the medias on women’s rights and gender based violence (radio, TV, newspaper)
- Training workshop in small trade to help rural women to diverse their source of incomes
- Football match
- Visit to women in prison
- March past (parade)

We had a rewarding, inspiring, funny and wonderful roundtable with Civil Society organizations on the theme “Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50:50 by 2030”. We want equal pay, now... 2030 is very far... We want maternity leave to be considered and paid everywhere in Cameroon. The roundtable gave to participants the opportunity of sharing experiences and best practices, of discussing and finding out some new strategic to be put in place through advocacy campaigns to eradicate gender inequality in the workplace in Cameroon. We also heard stories from some women victims of violence and discrimination in several areas.

We dream of a better working world : a more inclusive, gender equal world. Realizing women’s economic empowerment requires transformative change so that prosperity is equitably shared and no one is left behind.

### MICROFINANCE – Flexible and disciplined

Gudrun Haupter , Deutscher Frauenring,

Project Committee for West Africa

I wish to share information on savings communities in Africa.

In Nov. 2016 Eva-Maria Bruchhaus wrote about historical and current aspects of “Tontines”. She has worked on a number of development issues in francophone West Africa and I know her from the time I met with IAW member organizations in Burkina Faso and visited their projects partly financed by Deutscher Frauenring.

The full text is on <http://www.dandc.eu/node/2826> and deserves our attention.



*Savings groups are common all over Africa*

“Tontines” are an example of economic, social and cultural solidarity. Solidarity is their great strength. Collective savings can be very successful. A group of market trader women from Abidjan, the economic capital of the Côte d’Ivoire, are an example. As a cooperative, they have built up a market



with about 200 shops and 700 stalls. They were supported by the international microcredit provider Oikocredit.

At its core, savings communities are based on an old method of economical cooperation that is called “tontine” in francophone West Africa. Tontines are associations of relatives, neighbours, friends or work colleagues. Tontines are more common among West African women than among men. Especially in rural areas, tontines consist mostly of women, They mostly have clear and simple rules, which are observed with great discipline.

Let me add that it helps if microcredit funding is provided by someone living close-by, the recipients know the benefactor and the heads of the organization keep an eye on the use of the credit. On a modest scale this is the case in our FGM project in rural Burkina Faso – which also sensitizes the members of rural women’s clubs to family planning. Our Austrian partner used funds he received from a Circle of Friends back home to allocate mini-credits to 63 women’s clubs to be paid back with a yearly 5 % interest. Most of them are illiterate and signed by finger-print. One member of each group received a very basic training in micro-credit managing. Initially the clubs decided that each of its members got the same tiny sum to help them start individually a mini-enterprise in the sectors agriculture, small livestock or trading. Since then 15 clubs pooled their resources and are now able to negotiate conditions, particularly for the use of land. Micro-credits clearly increased the women’s standing and self-confidence.

*Around the World*

*Human Rights Council*

*New York, USA*

*India*

### **The Impossible Diplomacy of Human Rights**

Lecture by **Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, at Georgetown University on the occasion of the presentation of the Trainor Award for Excellence in the Conduct of Diplomacy.

[Read this extremely interesting lecture](#)

"The Fearless Girl" statue facing the Charging Bull erected to honour International Women's Day in Lower Manhattan in New York City.



**Anja Basu**, AIWC has sent this article from the Indian newspaper, The Telegraph:

Child marriage, early pregnancy and malnourishment leading to maternal mortality were in focus at a workshop organised by the Child in Need Institute (CINI) and Population Foundation of India recently.

Forty per cent of women in Bengal are married off before they turn 18. The statistics provided by the Population Foundation of India shows a slight dip from last year.

Child brides from Bengal remain much in demand in states with a skewed sex ratio.

[Read the whole article](#)

**IAW Editorial group:**  
lenepind@gmail.com  
**International women's News:**  
iawiwn@womenalliance.org  
**Membership Officer:**  
iaw.membership@womenalliance.o