

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

**IAW website: <http://www.womenalliance.org>**

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

**IAW NEWSLETTER August 2009, no. 8**



**Equal Rights**

*Dear IAW members,*

*We looked this time at the extensive discussions in the Security Council on Sexual Violence and in particular at the situation of the millions of asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless persons and internally displaced persons in the world.*

*You will find only a selection of the remarks here, but we do hope you can see how important it is to convince your government to sign the Optional Protocol to ECOSOC in time !*

*Women in politics: how do they handle opposition? With examples from the UK, Congo and Japan. Also in this newsletter: the programmes of CSW 2010-2014 and that of CEDAW 2009-2010. And, there are still possibilities for funding the women's movement. Conferences and links to interesting websites are as usual at the end of the newsletter.*

**INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN**

**Urgent Request**

**Campaign for international justice for victims of violations of economic, social & cultural rights**  
The Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OP ICESCR) has been adopted. However there is still some way to go before it becomes an instrument women can use to promote and protect their rights. On 24 September 2009, the OP ICESCR opens for signature by States. **It can only come into force if enough States sign it.**

You can help to make this happen by contacting your government **and urging them to sign the Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

We hope that you can help to bring the OP ICESCR into force and make it an effective instrument for women. Information on: <http://www.opicescr-coalition.org/>

Information in French and Spanish is available on the same website.

*Sent to us by IAW secretary Lene Pind*

**IAW at CSW – and Beijing+15**

*IAW secretary Lene Pind writes: 'We have invited all members of IAW to take part in producing a sort of shadow report on the status of women 15 years after Beijing.*

*The International Meeting in Switzerland decided to focus on a few areas only, and now we ask you to tell us where – in these areas - you believe that progress has been made, and where you think there is still work to be done.*

*We are looking forward to receiving your contributions on [iawsec@womenalliance.org](mailto:iawsec@womenalliance.org) before September 15.'*

**Obituary Helvi Sipilä of Finland**

Helvi Sipilä, who was well known for her leadership in the women's movement and who was also an honorary member of IAW, died at 94.

As President of the International Federation of Women Lawyers, IAW often had the honour and pleasure of working with her.

An impression of her distinguished career at the United Nations can be found at [http://www.unifem.org/news\\_events/story\\_detail.php?StoryID=879](http://www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=879)

## SECURITY COUNCIL

### Security Council - Sexual Violence

"Despite some progress over the past two decades, the deliberate targeting of civilians through sexual violence continues on a widespread and systematic basis", UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the Security Council on Friday August 7.

The [Security Council](#) is meeting on this issue a year after it adopted a resolution determining that sexual violence poses a threat to international peace and security when used as a tactic of war.

"Like a grenade or a gun, sexual violence is part of their arsenal to pursue military, political, social and economic aims. The perpetrators generally operate with impunity. I have met victims of sexual violence. I am haunted by their testimony," he said.

#### From planning to implementation

Mr. Ban said sexual violence should be addressed from the planning to implementation of peacekeeping mandates.

He said he has instructed UN peacekeeping force commanders to keep this issue as a top priority in working to maintain peace and security. "In my meeting with the Force Commanders, I had given a clear and strong instruction that the military leaders should keep this issue as the top priority in working to maintain peace and security.

I call on Council members and other States, as well as civilian and military leaders, to join forces to address this grave problem. I repeat: no act of sexual exploitation and abuse by any UN personnel will be tolerated."

The Secretary-General added that he is studying the costs of appointing a new senior system-wide official to address sexual violence.

### Security Council - Discussion on Refugees

George Okoth-Obbo, director of the Africa Bureau, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR), said the mandate and mission of the UNCHR was fundamentally humanitarian and, as stated in its statute, its work shall be non-political.

Its work relied quintessentially on the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Mr. Okoth-Obba highlighted three particular points:

1. It was important to acknowledge and applaud the fact that, across the world, the system of international protection – a system based fundamentally on humanitarian principles – continued to demonstrate resilience. Under this system protection, dignity and solutions were continuing to be found for the
  - \* 10.5 million refugees worldwide of concern to the UNCHR,
  - \* 14.4 million internally displaced persons benefiting from the services of the Office, and
  - \* an estimated 12 million statelessness persons who are the subject of the UNCHR activities.
2. There was also a very sad and preoccupying narrative of asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless persons and internally displaced persons the world over being treated extremely badly.
3. There were the concerns over the safety of humanitarian staff. Two weeks ago the UNCHR lost another staff member in **Pakistan**, the third killing in that country in less than five months.

#### Gender in operations

Responding to questions and comments raised during the interactive discussion, George Okoth-Obbo said, in answer to the question raised by Norway on the centrality of gender in operations, that across the board this was infused in all policies and programmes of the UNCHR.

On examples of good practices raised by Sweden, in **Chad** for example, a framework bringing together the humanitarian, military, police and Government personnel had taken place in order to map-out objectives.

There would indeed be instances when methodologies and frameworks would need to be mapped out with parties to a conflict that would not have traditionally engaged in such discussions.

*Excerpts of discussions in the Security Council:* <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/>

*(See also the articles on refugees in Chad and Pakistan in the IAW July Newsletter)*

### **Security Council - Myanmar - Daw Aung San Suu Kyi**

The UN Security Council voiced "serious concern" on Thursday August 13 about a sentence passed on Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, *in a watered down statement designed to win the consent of China and Russia.*

The statement, read to journalists by British Ambassador John Sawers, current president of the Council, called for the **release of all political prisoners** in the Asian country.

A Myanmar court on Tuesday sentenced Suu Kyi, who has spent 14 of the past 20 years in detention, to three years in jail. The ruling junta then reduced the sentence to 18 months of house arrest at her lakeside home in Yangon.

"The members of the Security Council express serious concern at the conviction and sentencing of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and its political impact," the council statement said.

Reuters, more on: <http://in.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idINIndia-4174682009081>

### **Thailand sounds out ASEAN on Suu Kyi pardon**

On Friday August 14 Thailand said it was asking neighbouring Asian states to support a request to Myanmar's junta to pardon opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, back under house arrest after a court conviction this week. "I already sent a letter to ASEAN members, but we need a consensus," Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya told reporters by telephone after talks in Malaysia with his ministerial counterpart.

Along with Thailand and Myanmar, ASEAN groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam. Thailand currently chairs ASEAN.

More on: <http://in.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idINIndia-41758820090814>

## **CSW and CEDAW**

### **Commission on the Status of Women identifies multi-year programme 2010-2014**

The themes that were agreed upon are:

- For the 54th session in 2010: Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly.
- For the 55th session in 2011: Women and girls in science and technologies: increasing opportunities in education, research and employment. Review theme: agreed conclusions from the 2007 session on the "Elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against the girl child."
- For the 56th session in 2012: The empowerment of rural women, in relation to climate change and food security. Review theme: the agreed conclusions from the 2008 session on "Financing for gender equality and empowerment of women."
- For the 57th session in 2013: Addressing stereotypes which constrain the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women, including in decision-making. Review theme: the agreed conclusions from the 2009 session on "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS."
- For the 58th session in 2014: Prevention of violence against women and girls. Review theme: the agreed conclusions from the 2011 session, "Women and girls in science and technology: Increasing opportunities in education, research and employment."

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 44th session (20 July - 7 August 2009): <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=31539&Cr=cedaw&Cr1=>

### **CEDAW**

The United Nations Committee which monitors compliance with the international convention on eliminating discrimination against women is 30 years old this year but, as it meets this week at UN Headquarters in New York, it is considering some very modern problems.

The chair of the committee, Naela Mohammed Gabr, asks countries about the

- \* impact of the financial crisis on their basic social services, including women's salaries and women's unemployment, and the
- \* scourge' of trafficking in women, and
- \* the impact on women of diseases including outbreaks of influenza.

### **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights**

All the Committee's findings go to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva and form

part of the Universal Periodic Review process, which involves a review of the records of all 192 UN Member States once every four years.

Ms. Gabr believes that sooner or later, all Member States will join the Convention, including the United States, which has signed but not ratified it. She hopes the new US administration will move to ratify it soon. The issue is that they will join, with or without reservations, she said, adding that even some countries that had joined the Convention without reservations did not have a perfect record of implementation.

### **CEDAW Programme**

(Countries where IAW has members are in bold)

The 44th session (20 July - 7 August 2009) will review the situation of women in: **Azerbaijan**, Bhutan, **Denmark**, Guinea-Bissau, Laos, **Japan**, Liberia, Spain, **Switzerland**, Timor-Leste and Tuvalu.

45th CEDAW Jan. 2010 - Botswana, **Egypt**, Malawi, **Netherlands**, Panama, the United Arab Emirates, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

46th CEDAW August 2010: Albania, Argentina, **Australia**, **Fiji**, Papua New Guinea, the Russian Federation, **Turkey** and on:

10-14 August 2010 **African Republic**, Grenada, Seychelles

Read more on: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws44.htm>

## **FUNDING THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT**

### **Fund for Gender Equality - Call for Proposals**

UNIFEM is pleased to announce the first call for proposals for the Fund for Gender Equality, a multi-donor initiative dedicated to the advancement of high-impact gender equality programmes that focus on women's economic and/or political empowerment at local and national levels.

Application deadline: 30 September 2009.

**Implementation Grants** will range from US\$2 million to US\$5 million distributed over a period of two to four years. These grants will support programmes in countries with agreed upon national or local plans, policies or laws that advance gender equality and women's empowerment and that are ready for implementation.

**Catalytic Grants** will range from US\$100,000 to US\$500,000 distributed over a period of one to two years. These grants will support the establishment of strategic coalitions or partnerships to catalyse the development and endorsement of gender equality national or local plans, policies or laws. Once a plan, policy or law is developed and endorsed, successful institutions will be eligible to apply in the future for a larger Implementation Grant.

More on: <http://www.unifem.org/>

### **UN Trust Fund Alert**

Due to the global economic and financial crisis, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women is facing a dramatic shortfall in donor contributions. This year, the fund has received more than 1,600 proposals from all over the world. But there's only US\$9 million available, not even half of the US\$22 million granted last year.

See also :[http://www.unifem.org/news\\_events/story\\_detail.php?StoryID=910](http://www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=910)

### **The Power and Impact of Women's Funds**

This paper summarizes six recent reports about the impact, investment practices and values of women's funds. This significant body of evidence, collected over the period 2006-2009, shows a remarkable commonality in findings, and makes a compelling case for the distinctive and valuable role of women's funds in accelerating social justice.

The research was conducted by leading research institutions and consultants including the Foundation Center; Social Policy Research Associates; and Clohesy Consulting.

On: [http://www.womensfundingnetwork.org/sites/wfnet.org/files/FINALResearchSummary\\_1...](http://www.womensfundingnetwork.org/sites/wfnet.org/files/FINALResearchSummary_1...)

## **POLITICAL WOMEN IN THE NEWS - UK, US, JAPAN**

### **UK - Harriet Harman digs in her heels to demand tougher rape law**

Harriet Harman has vetoed a review of the rape laws at the eleventh hour, complaining that the

proposals fail to address the concerns of women. Labour's deputy leader used her position as Gordon Brown's stand-in to demand a more radical overhaul of the law, such as targets for prosecutors and police to secure more convictions. She has the backing of Vera Baird, the Solicitor-General, but Jack Straw, the Justice Secretary and Alan Johnson, the Home Secretary, do not want to widen the terms of reference and the review has been postponed.

#### **Stand-in**

Ms Harman has been standing in for the Prime Minister since he left for a summer break last week. Her duties include chairing a Downing Street meeting to finalise Government announcements. According to Whitehall officials, she tore up plans to begin a study of the rape laws after clashing with civil servants. "There's been a bit of a kerfuffle over the substance," said one. "It's been looked at again."

Campaigners say that women face a culture of disbelief and delayed responses from police, which can mean vital evidence being lost, and that more training is required to ensure that rape is treated as a serious crime.

They also suggest that juries need more guidance. Research has found that many believe that if a woman did not do everything to fight off her attacker, or if she had been drinking, she was complicit. However, a Home Office source said: "We have to be realistic about what is possible given where we are in the electoral cycle."

#### **No all-male leadership team ?**

Ms Harman has already clashed with John Prescott, her predecessor, over her suggestion at the weekend that Labour should never again have an all-male leadership team. She also suggested that the banks would have avoided reckless lending if they had had more women on their boards.

There has been tension with Lord Mandelson, the Business Secretary, who has tried to limit the effects on companies of her equality legislation. More on:

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article6739430.ece>

*Sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu*

#### **US Secretary of State Clinton Announces Plan to Address Sexual Violence in Congo**

In the realization of a pledge to address pervasive sexual violence in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Secretary of State Clinton unveiled a \$17 million initiative on August 11 to combat the gender-based violence that she referred to as "evil in its basest form," as The New York Times reports.

Through the plan, the American government will "help train gynecologists, supply rape victims with video cameras to document violence and dispatch military engineers to help train Congolese police officers to crack down on rapists."

During a meeting with doctors and human rights advocates in Goma, Secretary Clinton commented: **"This problem is too big for one country to solve alone."**

The Secretary further added that in discussions with Congolese President Kabila, she pressed the leader to take necessary steps to protect civilians and facilitate the safe return of internally displaced persons.

#### **Complicated situation ?**

John Prendergast of the Enough Project, a group addressing genocide, praised Secretary Clinton's visit and said that US engagement with the conflict in Congo must also address the root causes of the war, believed to be tied with economic interests and the illicit mineral trade of coltan: "The US should work with the electronics industry to trace, audit and certify this trade, and pressure neighboring states like Rwanda to stop smuggling. Like with the blood diamonds that fuel wars in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Angola, until the economic driver for conflict is addressed, there is no chance for peace."

Read more on: <http://vitalvoicesonline.org/blog/2009/08/13/secretary-of-state-clinton-reveals-plan-to-address-sexual-violence-in-congo/>

*Sent to us by IAW Member Anjana Basu*

#### **We don't count the women' — gender inequality in Japanese companies**

The new chief executive of one of Japan's larger companies sat up late into the night recently puzzling over the accounts. He simply could not work out why there seemed to be so many more people working in the office than appeared on the books.

An assistant explained it to him the next day: we don't count the women.

Gender equality advocates and women's groups say that, for as long as anyone can remember, the Japanese political world has done much the same — ignored the interests of half the population, discounted their talents and squandered an economic goldmine.

### **August 30 election**

Those same groups believe that the August 30 general election, for which unofficial campaigning begins today, may represent the single biggest opportunity to subvert a system that feels structurally and emotionally pitted against women.

Even the Cabinet office acknowledges that there is much that needs to change. The international gender empowerment rankings are just one of many equality-focused gauges in which Japan scores badly. It stands in 54th place — behind Tanzania and narrowly ahead of Moldova.

### **We need change**

“This is an election that has the potential to change women's status in Japan more than any in the past,” said Ikuko Tanioka, president of Chukyo Women's University and a member of parliament's Upper House. “Previous elections were all about big companies and the macro-economy. This one is about real life. Parliament can no longer be run according to the armchair logic of old men.”

Professor Tanioka's comments come amid a significant rise in the number of women candidates standing in the coming election.

### **Women are at the heart of change**

Machiko Osawa, a professor of labour economics at the Japan Women's University, said: “So much needs to change but women are at the heart of that. We need equal pay for equal work, pension reform, daycare reform and infinitely better support for working mothers. These are all things that would make fundamental differences to the economy but the underlying problem for Japan is still one of attitude.”

— Only 9.4 per cent of parliamentary seats are held by women — ranking Japan 131st in political participation out of 189 countries

— Only 2.5 per cent of professorial posts in science departments across national universities were occupied by women. By Leo Lewis, *The Times*, August 8, 2009 - a selection.

More on: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6788036.ece>

*Sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu*

## ***LINKS - CONFERENCES - REPORTS***

### ***HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF ECOSOC 6 - 9 JULY 2009 - GENEVA***

Discussions on Health can be found on <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/amr2009.shtml>

### **62nd DPI NGO Conference**

The 62nd Annual Conference for Non-Governmental Organizations will be held on the theme “For Peace and Development: Disarm Now,” in Mexico City from 9-11 September 2009.

Information on: <http://www.ngodpiexecom.org/conference.htm>

### **Civil Society Best Practices Network**

This website shows projects, many organised by women, all over the world.

On: <http://esango.un.org/irene/Index?page=viewPractice&nr=364>

IAW Newsletter / News Flash : Joke Sebus

<[iaw.newsletter@inter.nl.net](mailto:iaw.newsletter@inter.nl.net)>

International Women's News : Priscilla Todd (English)

<[iaw.iwnews@womenalliance.org](mailto:iaw.iwnews@womenalliance.org)>

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