

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

Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities
Droits Égaux - Responsabilités Égales

IAW NEWSLETTER - February 1999 - 02

Dear IAW members,

This Newsletter will focus mainly on the the four subjects of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), March 1-19 1999 at the UN in New York. Those four are: 1) Health; 2) Institutional Mechanisms; 3) the Prepcom and 4) the Optional Protocol. It will probably be 'heavy' reading for the newcomers among us, but the CSW meeting is of the utmost importance for the IAW. We have also put in an attachment with an inspiring article from the New York Times, of 'Rebecca Peters and the Gun Makers on Trial'.

Who will be attending

The International Alliance of Women will be represented by our President, **Patricia Giles** and by **Kay Fraleigh-Potts**, who is the IAW representative at the Advancement of Women (DAW) and at the UNO and HR. Other IAW members will be attending the CSW as members of governmental delegations, like IAW vice-president **Hana Elroy**, of the delegation of Israël. Or they will be observers for NGOs, representing IAW Affiliates or one of the many other NGOs that are attending the 43rd CSW.

The two functional Commissions on Health and Institutional Mechanisms will meet in the first two CSW weeks. The third and last CSW week is for the Prepcom plus 5, the preparing of the appraisal of the Plan of Action of Beijing, in a special session, June 5-9, 2000.

The Working Group on the draft of the optional protocol will meet in parallel with the two functional Commissions and the Prepcom.

NGOs

It will be interesting to know how many NGOs and how many observers will have registered this time. From e-mail networks we have seen a lot of mail that showed how well some NGOs have been preparing the CSW subjects. From the e-mail networks we also heard some bitter complaints, because some countries offered to include a NGO representative in their official government delegation, if (if!) she paid her own costs. New York is expensive! And if such a NGO representative is included in a government delegation, with or without her own funding, it is often not clear what her position is. Can she take part in decisions like the other members of the delegation, is she an observer or an adviser of the delegation, or is she only an alias for the link between the official delegation and the national NGOs? And in all respect for governmental delegations: is this what the subject 'institutional mechanisms' is about?

NGO observers who are attending can, from the beginning of CSW, create their own e-mail address! Your Editorial Committee is trying to throw a virtual line to our IAW delegation. May be we will be able to send you some extra IAW Newsletters.

Even so, it's a pity that we cannot have a look behind the curtains of that big and colourful stage of the UN. Just to observe: the lobbying of delegations; the negotiating to try to find at top speed the right words to get consensus on a sensitive article; the clustering of NGOs, trying to find each other in a strategy to amend or curtail a difficult paragraph. And, in

between, there will be discussion groups, film showings, workshops, etc, organised by NGOs, and topped by an International Women's Day on the 8th of March!

HEALTH

Health is the subject of Panel I, starting on the morning of March the 3rd.

In the January Newsletter Gudrun Haupter gave us an indication where bottlenecks can be expected. In general, just have a look at 'Crucial ideas and Requests', which are written down in section IV: A Framework for Designing National Health Policies with an Integrated Gender Perspective'.

We are expecting a discussion on paragraph 57 for example, a paragraph expressing concern with the thousands of maternal deaths each year, caused by: 'unsafe abortion'. The website where the documentation can be found is:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/wohealth.htm>

There are busy days lying ahead for the experts on Health, because the UN Commission on Population and Development, which serves a Prepcom on Cairo plus 5, will have a meeting in that same month of March. Rosy Weiss who, with Lajla Pernaska (NGO Forum), attended the Prepcom in The Hague, writes us:

'Population and Development: The regional (UNECE) PrepCom for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session to review and appraise the implementation of the Cairo Declaration and Plan of Action scheduled for June 30 to July 2, 1999 in New York was held from 7 to 9 December 1998 in Budapest. Preparations will continue from 6 to 12 February 1999 in Den Haag with the global preparatory meeting including an NGO Forum, a Forum of Parliamentarians and a Youth Forum, and the 32 session of the UN Commission on Population and Development , New York, 22-30 March 1999'.

In this Prepcom a report will be negotiated, which has been drafted by the United Nations Population Fund. The report will probably have six sections, including: Gender Equality; Equity and the Empowerment of Women; Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health. The experts will certainly like to use the reports of the CSW Commission on Health, starting March the 3rd, so it will be busy days for a lot of other people as well, including our IAW experts!

IAW Commission Convenor Health: Gudrun Haupter

IAW Commission Convenor All Forms of Violence/Trafficking in Women: Rosy Weiss.

See also website:

http://www.unfpa.org/ICPD/round&meetings/hague_forum/reports/forumrept.htm

INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

This CSW Commission Panel II will start on Thursday 4 March. Information is to be found on website:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/institu.htm#object1>

The text of the paragraphs 196-209 is well formulated, but it is all rather technical.

Maybe the Virtual Working Group on National Mechanisms for Gender Equality, which is running an e-mail discussion till March 19, will bring us more inspiring material. Like case studies, adequate legislation, good practices, strategies, examples of good accountability and monitoring. If you like to join the discussion, you are welcome! Look for information on:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/forum/natmach.htm>

An excellent website and also one that no IAW member should miss, is that of the Inter-Parliamentary Union or IPU, at:

<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

And, if you like to quote from the rich history of the IAW, please have a look at the wonderful Women's Suffrage page of the IPU:

<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/suffrage.htm>

IAW Commission Convenor: Lene Pind

The Optional Protocol to CEDAW

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), is an international bill of rights for women. It has been ratified by 161 states. Once countries have ratified the Women's Convention they have to submit reports on the position of women in their countries within an year of ratification and subsequently every 4th year to a Committee of 23 experts who monitor the Convention. These experts are all independent and serve in their personal capacity and do not represent their Governments, although nominated by them and elected by State Parties. Every year a certain amount of countries are reporting to a Committee, working under the Convention.

Of those 161 states 56 have never submitted a preliminary report on the follow-up action they have taken, and some 30 states are very late in submitting the subsequent periodic reports. If you want to know if your county is one of those 'misbehaving' in that sense, see:

<http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/162-wmn.htm>

The ***Optional Protocol*** is a petition procedure for the CEDAW Convention for the rights and obligations contained in the Convention. It has a complaints procedure to enable women to take their case to the UN and an inquiries procedure to enable the Committee to investigate serious or systemic human rights violations against women.

For four long years governmental delegations have been negotiating the draft to the optional protocol to CEDAW. Recently the countries of the European Union have reached consensus on the text. Will the protocol at last be accepted during the 43rd CSW? Who knows!

Denmark and the Prepcom

IAW Commission Convenor on CEDAW is Padmini Casinader Christiansen, who has done a lot of work on the CEDAW Convention in Denmark for the Danish Women's Society.

She writes: 'As a Convenor for the IAW Committee on CEDAW I have been writing to several of our organisations. The Danish Government has already started preparing for the special Session in the year 2000 and has invited the women's organisations among others to take part in this. We have been invited to be members of a Committee to give our ideas and also comment on their presentation to the special session as well as the CSW. We also have been asked to comment on the speeches the EU Presidency is making to these Meetings'.

IAW Commission Convenor on CEDAW: Padmini Casinader Christiansen

NEWS

Rosy Weiss has sent us the following news items (thank you, Rosy!).

Social cohesion: In implementing the decisions of the 2nd Summit of Heads of State and Governments of the member States of the Council of Europe, 1997, several steering committees have now been merged into one important European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS). The new Forum for Children and several other committees of the Council

of Europe in the fields of social security, employment, social policy etc. are now subordinate to the CDCS. The CDCS is expected to come up with a European Strategy for Social Cohesion.

Towards a child-friendly society is the theme of a Conference of the Council of Europe Ministers responsible for Family Affairs, to be held in Stockholm from 14 to 16 June 1999.

Equal participation of men and women in decision-making: The third ministerial conference of Ministers for the status of women of the European Union will be held in Paris from 16 to 17 April 1999 on the topic of equal participation in decision-making. Previous conferences were held in Rome in 1992 and in Athens in 1996. The President of the European Commission, Jacques Santer and the French Prime-Minister, Lionel Jospin, are expected to attend the conference.

Family: An NGO Family Week was organised at the Vienna International Center from 23 to 27 November 1998. It included an international seminar on local networks and structures to support families, an extraordinary General Assembly of the International Union of Family Organisations (now Work Family Organisation), an international seminar of the European Region of IUFO (E-IUFO) on the implications of social and economic change on the families and their members, NGO meetings on the future of family programmes, and an expert conference on voluntary work between idealism and social competence.
Website: <http://www.jugendinfo.at/eiufo/eiufo.htm>

Forthcoming events in Vienna:

UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, 8th session and meetings for informal consultations and open-ended working groups on draft proposals, 27 April - 6 May.
IAW delegation so far Dorothea Khulusi - other applications are most welcome.....

Gun makers, and a Culture, on Trial

Picture: Click, click, click. The sound was faint inside a Brooklyn courtroom on Monday. It underscored the events being played out in Federal court, where the relatives of people slain by illegal handguns are suing more than 25 gun manufacturers who they say negligently marketed guns to states with weak gun laws.

Click, click, click. The clicking came from among the spectators, where Rebecca Peters was busily typing notes about guns and their availability into her laptop computer.
(This is a selection: see the attachment!).

From the EC

On special request from IAW members in the next Newsletter(s) information of:

- * ***1999, the Year of the Elderly*** and
- * ***1999, the Year of Women against Violence.***

Note

The e-mail address: <sebus.gj@inter.nl.net> will be temporarily out of reach on Monday, March 1. After that date e-mail letters will be gladly received again.

With best wishes
from the Editorial Committee IAW on Internet (EC),
Joke Sebus

NB

We invite you to redistribute this Newsletter to IAW members without an e-mail address. Also, please advise us if you know of any IAW members or affiliate/associate organisations with an e-mail address, and in that case: please be so kind to contact Pat Richardson.

International Alliance of Women / Alliance Internationale des Femmes

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