

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

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

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

IAW NEWSLETTER February 2011, no. 2



Equal Rights

Dear members,

The first delegations for CSW have arrived in New York. IAW is well prepared and has organised several events. We, at home, are waiting for news by sms, blogs, twitters, tweets and so on. In this newsletter three UN Women: Navi Pillay, Josette Sheeran and Valerie Amos are speaking up: for human rights, for a plan to be prepared for rising food prices and for finding a political solution for the homeless in Somalia. Soaring food prices are giving the UN a lot of concern. Demonstrations in the Arabic States and promised reforms afterwards can bring a ray of hope that more women will become directly involved in politics, particularly in Egypt. This last two months saw a lot of worldwide UN conferences. Coverage of some of them is at the end of the newsletter for those who are interested in the subjects.

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN

A letter from Egypt

Horeya Megahed, IAW Regional Vice President Arab Countries writes:

On the demonstrations

There are many pictures showing the participation of Egyptian women, especially young women, in the demonstrations. Some of them spent the nights with their colleagues in Tahrir Square, i.e. Liberation Square. They were so enthusiastic to do that. It is worth noting that the Egyptian women also participated in the demonstrations led by Mrs. Hoda Sharawi in 1919 against the British Colonial Rule. Tahrir Square was given this name after this foreign occupation ended.

On a quota system in the constitution

I would like to stress that from teaching Women and Politics, I am dealing with the issue of quota in the world. It is obvious that there are few states in the world that stipulate on the quota system in the constitution, while the great majority of states are using the party list instead. In Egypt, we have introduced the quota for women and it was applied in the last election of November 2010 by introducing 32 new constituencies reserved for women, which led to the election of 64 women in the last dissolved parliament, in addition to two elected in the general constituencies and one appointed by the President. The total was 67 women representing about 12.5% of the parliament. (The quota was meant to be applied for 2 terms but unfortunately the first term did not last for more than few weeks, due to the dissolution of the parliament). The general trend is to apply the party list rather than individual voting and this is regulated by the electoral law.

Egypt - A petition - Constitutional Committee Starts Working While Neglecting and Excluding Female Legal Experts

- The institutions and organizations below have signed this statement in disapproval of the criteria and formation of the Constitutional Committee, whereby the committee does not include a single female expert.
- Advancing with a committee like this triggers fears and suspicions with regard to the future of Egypt and the transitional phase which Egypt is currently witnessing after the 25th of January Revolution. This issue poses a critical question with regard to democracy and the main aims of the revolution, which were initially spelled out as equality, freedom, democracy and participation of all citizens.
- We are hereby questioning the criteria according to which the members of the Constitutional Committee are chosen. Are they based on political criteria or on values of equality and justice as spelled out by the revolution? If the criteria are based on efficiency and integrity, then why

are female legal experts excluded despite the fact that Egypt is rich in the choice of female constitutional experts whether in the Supreme Constitutional Court or the Faculties of Law.

- We believe that as Egyptian women largely and equally participated in the revolution with Egyptian men and some of them have been jailed and still lost while others have even been martyred, they have the right to participate in building the new Egyptian State on the simple basis of citizenship.
- Nevertheless, we strongly have confidence in the discretion of the Military Council in guiding Egypt towards democracy. Hence, we are making the statement today to stress on the values of citizenship and participation of women, specifically in the Constitutional Committee at the moment.

Signed by 63 Egyptian organisations.
On: http://ecwronline.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1&lang=english
Sent to us by IAW General Secretary Lene Pind

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Main Theme: Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work.
Review Theme: Elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child.

Useful Links

First week, 22 - 25 February 2011:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw55/parallel-list.html>

Second week, 28 February - 4 March 2011:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw55/parallel-list2.html>

Parallel events organised by NGOs:

<http://www.ngocsw.org/parallel-events/schedule/2011-02-23#>

Events organised by the International Alliance of Women

- Conversation with **Dr Koasar Afsana** - Thursday **February 24** - 13.00-500 pm - UN Delegates Dining Room, UN New York.
Welcome by Lyda Verstegen, President IAW. Interview by Geoffrey Cowley, the National Media Director for Planned Parenthood (and former health editor for Newsweek)
- Parallel event: **Physical barriers to education** - Friday **February 25**, 10th floor Church Centre, 2-3 pm, New York.
- Parallel event: **Access to education, science, technology, decent jobs, and civil rights** - Monday **February 28**, 2nd floor Church Centre, 6-7.30 pm, New York,.
- A harmful traditional practice - **oral statement** by IAW member Georgette Arrey Taku from Cameroon.

Events to attend:

- **Monday 21 February** - is the day the NGOs get acquainted with the CSW program.
IAW members in New York will meet afterwards.
- **Sharing Knowledge - Joining forces - Gaining Power: Mentoring as a tool to empower NGO Women at CSW** - Thursday **February 24** - 1.15 pm - 2.45 pm.
Location: Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations, Street 600 Third Avenue, 31st floor. Mentoring Caucuses will be held on Feb. 23, 25, 28 + March 2.
By IAW Board member Daniela Reiter: Founder and Former Coordinator for the Project "genderize!" of the Austrian National Youth Council.
- **Live Webcast of the launch of UN Women** See also www.un.org/webcast
At the United Nations Headquarters, Michelle Barthelet speaking: Honouring the Past – Envisioning the Future for Women and Girls - Thursday, **24 February 2011**, 6:30 PM – 8:00

POLITICAL ISSUES

USA - Women's Health caught in the cross hairs of Republican Congress

NEW YORK, Feb 18, 2011 - Republicans in the US House of Representatives are seeking to eliminate

the Federal Family Planning programme and cut funding from Planned Parenthood, one of the country's leading providers of reproductive health care to low-income women.

On Friday afternoon, the House voted to bar Planned Parenthood from all federal funding.

The issue will go before the Senate in about two weeks' time.

It could still be reversed. Women's groups and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) have denounced the move as jeopardising the lives of millions of people who depend on these services, which include preventive care, cancer screenings, contraceptive services, and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections.

By Cléo Fatoorehchi. More on: <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=54533>

UN Human Rights chief Navi Pillay in Russia

17 February 2011 – The United Nations human rights chief Navi Pillay today urged Russian authorities to act without delay on reforms to key institutions relating to the rule of law and the fight against corruption and discrimination.

“I would stress that institutional reform is a matter of great urgency, and appeal to the President and all those in a position to increase the pace of change to do so,” High Commissioner for Human Rights **Navi Pillay** told reporters in Moscow, four days after starting her first visit to Russia.

“Rule of law, including accountability and protection of rights for all citizens and non-citizens on Russian territory, is an essential prerequisite for true democracy, peace and development.”

Frank discussions

Ms Pillay said her discussions with President Dmitry Medvedev earlier this week, and with various top officials, have included some “very frank” analyses of the reforms that are being undertaken, are under consideration, or are still needed, to key institutions relating to the rule of law and the fight against corruption and discrimination. These include the police, judiciary, General Prosecutor’s office, penitentiary system and military.

“I appreciate that in my discussions with the President, and most of the ministries and state officials, there was no attempt to downplay the challenges facing the Government in its efforts to revamp a system in which human rights are still a long way from being consistently respected in accordance with international standards, and with Russia’s own laws and Constitution,” she stated.

A new law on Police

Ms Pillay added that the extent and speed with which the new Law on Police, which will enter into force on 1 March, results in genuine change in the conduct of the police and will be a “litmus test” for the potential for meaningful reform in other areas. She stressed that accountability for those in power is essential if abuse of power is to be diminished and public trust established.

The High Commissioner also touched on issues related to the country’s legal system, the treatment of civil society, the situation of human rights defenders, and the treatment of women.

More on: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37556&Cr=russia&Cr1=>

Southern Sudan: Returnees attacked on their way south

Internal Displaced Persons travelling to Southern Sudan before and after the recent referendum on independence have faced difficulties during and after their journey.

Between November 2010 and January 2011, around 200,000 Southern Sudanese IDPs living in the north returned to the south.

There have been various reports of convoys of returning southerners being [attacked](#) in the disputed region of [Abyei](#) during and in the weeks following the January referendum, according to some reports by Misseriya tribal militias loyal to the government in Khartoum.

The Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC), IOM and partners are [monitoring](#), consolidating and verifying the number of returnees, including those who have returned without assistance, to ensure they are assisted as necessary.

IDP News Alert, 11 February 2011, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004D31AA/%28httpIDPNewsAlerts%29/84EA2CAFCBB20613C1257834002EF7A2?OpenDocument>

SOARING FOOD PRICES

UN agency on ‘red alert’ as soaring food prices threaten millions of world’s poorest

16 February 2011 – Record high food prices are putting added pressure on the United Nations agency that helps feed nearly 100 million of the world’s poorest people, with officials warning of a potential “perfect storm” combination of soaring costs, weather emergencies and political instability.

“We are on red alert and we are continually assessing needs and reassessing plans and stand ready to assist,” UN World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director **Josette Sheeran** told the UN News Centre, as her agency develops an action plan for early purchasing and setting up reserves and safety nets. “Rising food prices are a reality for the whole world, but they have the biggest impact on the poorest and most vulnerable populations.”

Result of rising prices

Meanwhile for households already living at subsistence level, the rises mean increased levels of malnutrition, a decrease in income available for schooling or access to health services, and potential instability, such as bread riots, in those countries that are worst affected.

Beyond the near doubling of wheat prices, maize is 73 per cent higher but crucially, for many of the world’s poor, rice prices have increased at a slower rate than other grains. Sugar and edible oils have also gone up sharply. Other food items essential for dietary diversity in many countries have increased, such as vegetables in India and China, and beans in some African countries.

The World Bank’s Food Price Watch reported that the increase in extreme poverty (under \$1.25 a day) due to the price hike is associated with higher malnutrition, as poorer people eat less and are forced to buy food that is both less expensive and less nutritious.

More on: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37547&Cr=food+prices&Cr1=>

UN official warns of humanitarian disaster as drought ravages Somalia and Kenya

17 February 2011 – Severe drought in Somalia has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the country with more people becoming internally displaced and others moving into refugee camps across the border in Kenya, as food and water scarcity worsen, the top United Nations humanitarian official said today.

Malnutrition rates among children, already above emergency levels in Somalia, have risen and an estimated 2.4 million people – 32 per cent of the country’s 7.2 million people – are in need of relief aid as a result of drought and two decades of conflict.

Finding a political solution

“I cannot stress enough the importance in Somalia of finding a political solution,” said Ms. Amos.

“Only that will enable the people of Somalia to live in peace and dignity,” she added.

Valerie Amos urged the Kenyan authorities to resettle an estimated 30,000 people who remain homeless since they were displaced during the post-election violence that rocked the country in 2008. She also called for increased humanitarian assistance for the nearly 431,000 refugees in Kenya – the vast majority of them from Somalia. More than 300,000 of the refugees live in the Dadaab camps, not far from Kenya’s border with Somalia.

More on: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37558&Cr=somali&Cr1=>

ALL AROUND THE WORLD

20,168 guns were melted down and destroyed in Campana, Argentina

On 11 December 2010 as part of a government plan for nationwide voluntary disarmament, the Ministry of Justice stated that more than 140,000 guns have been collected and destroyed since 2007. This is equivalent to 10% of the total number of firearms registered in the country. Further gun destructions are planned for 2011. The Argentinian Disarmament Network has been highly involved in the implementation of the Plan.

Mailed to us by IANSA .More on: <http://www.redparaeldesarme.org.ar>

India: More funds for schools

The implementation of the Right to Education Act should receive priority in the coming year, said Rukmini Banerji, the director of ASER Centre, a wing of NGO Pratham that publishes an Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) every year on the learning outcomes of children in schools.

She said poor infrastructure, lack of teachers and poor monitoring of the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, a flagship scheme of the ministry, should also receive due attention.

“Right to education has become a law. It should be implemented properly. The teachers’ vacancies should be filled up”, she said.

“Another important thing is that there should be a link between increased allocation and measurement of outcome. The learning outcome of children should be assessed properly by some credible organisation. This will ensure monitoring of the schemes,” she said.

A key indicator

The learning outcome is a key indicator to show whether the schemes are yielding desired results. The ASER report this year has found that the proportion of Class I children who can recognise numbers from one to nine has declined from 69 per cent in 2009 to 66 per cent in 2010.

The percentage of students of Class III who can solve two-digit subtraction problems has decreased from 39 to 36.5 per cent over the same period. The percentage of children of Class V who can solve simple division problems has dropped from 38 per cent in 2009 to 36 in 2010. *Part of an article by Basant Kumar Mohanty mailed to us by IAW member Anjana Basu.*

On http://www.telegraphindia.com/1110206/jsp/nation/story_13543056.jsp

Earth Summit 2012 Intersessional Meeting

The first intersessional meeting of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, January 10-11 2011 in New York was part of the preparatory process leading to Rio+20 Earth Summit in 2012.

Its objectives were to secure renewed political commitment, focus on international framework for sustainable development, and the green economy.

The Women’s Major Group emphasized the need for financial investments in building the capacity of women to participate in the green economy and enable women’s green business entrepreneurship.

Women’s organizations can participate in the Women’s Major Group preparations for Rio+20, May 14-16 2012, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The second preparatory committee meeting will take place March 7-8 2011 in New York at the UN.

More information is available at: <http://www.uncsd2012.org>

Submitted by IAW member Natalia Kostus.

REPORTS - LINKS - CONFERENCES - BOOKS

Conference on Prostitution & Trafficking - Copenhagen May 7-8 2011

This two-day conference at the 'Culture House Islands Brygge' in Copenhagen gathers researchers, international experts, police, policy makers, practitioners and NGOs from around the world.

Op <http://www.neww.eu/en/news/news/1,5445,2.html>

Girl with a Satchel: Book Shelf: Half the Sky

Most nights, when I'd finished a chapter or two of Half the Sky and switched off my reading light, I held the book to my chest and cried. ...

See: girlwithasatchel.blogspot.com/2010/11/book-shelf-half-sky.html - [Cached](#)

Sent to us by IAW member Sheila Deaves

Meetings Coverage

- [Commission for Social Development Concludes Forty-ninth Session Urging, in One of Five Resolutions, Debt Relief, Market Access to Address Poverty \(18 February 2011\)](#)

The Commission for Social Development wrapped up its forty-ninth session today by approving without a vote five draft resolutions calling for wide-ranging steps, from support for the New Partnership for Africa’s Development and the upcoming review of the action plan on ageing to improving the lot of youth, persons with disabilities and families.

On: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2011/soc4778.doc.htm>

- [Economic and Social Council Adopts Text on Structure of World Food Programme’s Executive Board, Defers Three Draft Decisions on 2011 Substantive Session \(18 February 2011\)](#)

The Economic and Social Council today forwarded to the General Assembly a resolution concerning the structure of the World Food Programme’s Executive Board, essentially

maintaining the current distribution of seats and rotation pattern.
On: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2011/ecosoc6466.doc.htm>

- [General Assembly Seeks to Boost Global Cooperation, from Relief to Development, to Aid States, United Nations with Humanitarian Fallout from Natural Disasters \(28 January 2011\)](#)
Expressing deep concern at the challenges to Member States and the United Nations humanitarian response capacity to deal with the consequences of natural disasters, General Assembly delegates today urged updating early warning systems, disaster preparedness and risk reduction measures at all levels to fulfil pledges made in the 2005 Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, a global blueprint to reduce social, economic and environmental losses caused by such emergencies. GA/11047
- [Forest Loss, Degradation Blamed on Neglect of Social, Cultural, Human Aspects as Forum Holds Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue \(26 January 2011\)](#)
The loss and degradation of the world's forests continued at a high rate owing to neglect of the social and cultural factors of forestry, Lambert Okrah, focal point for non-governmental organizations, said today as the United Nations Forum on Forests held the multi-stakeholder dialogue segment of its ninth session. ENV/DEV/1181
- [Concerned about Humanitarian Situation in Darfur, Secretary-General Reminds Belligerents that Hostilities will Directly Affect Peace Process \(28 January 2011\)](#)
The following statement was issued today by the Spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon: SG/SM/13374-AFR/2105
- [Global Compact LEAD Initiative Can Steer Level of Sustainability Performance World Needs Today, from Business, Says Secretary-General at Launch of Scheme \(28 January 2011\)](#)
Following is the text of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks at the launch of the Global Compact LEAD Initiative, today, 28 January, in Davos, Switzerland: SG/SM/13373-ECO/187
- [Twentieth-Century Model 'A Global Suicide Pact', Secretary-General Tells World Economic Forum Session on Redefining Sustainable Development \(28 January 2011\)](#)
Following are UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks to the World Economic Forum session on redefining sustainable development, in Davos, Switzerland, today, 28 January: SG/SM/13372-ECO/186-ENV/DEV/1182

Note

We are sending this Newsletter as an attachment, saved in Word 97. Please be so kind to advise Pat Richardson if you know of any IAW members or affiliate/associate organisations with an e-mail address, so we can mail them this Newsletter too.

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