

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

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

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



Equal Rights

ACTION SHEET – March 2013

IAW Secretary Lene Pind writes:

Dear members,

I take it that we are all relieved to see that agreed conclusions were achieved. The final version – not the official one, but the one regarded as final by the Chair, will be attached in the next newsletter.

On the whole I think that CSW was a positive event. The number of active NGOs was bigger than ever, there was a strong commitment among the delegates, UNWomen headed by Michelle Bachelet worked hard and with success, and a final document was achieved, but of course there are problems, huge problems.

The biggest problem for women is probably the cross-regional group comprising countries such as Russia, Egypt, Qatar, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Uganda and others, who are very well organised and who work together not only at CSW **but also at the Human Rights Council**, where they have just proposed a resolution on “Protection of the Family”. At CSW they worked together with the Holy See to prevent such things as “reproductive rights and health”, “gender identity”, abortion etc.

Please be so kind to take URGENT ACTION NOW and contact your country’s Foreign Ministry indicating your concerns with a proposed Human Rights Resolution and your expectation that they will oppose the Resolution in its current form.

Lene Pind, Secretary General of the International Alliance of Women

**IMPORTANT ALERT - PROPOSED UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTION
ON "PROTECTION OF THE FAMILY"**

Copy of the Draft Resolution is Attached.

On Friday March 15th, at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, a cross-regional group of nine Member States (Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, Qatar, Russian Federation, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe) tabled a Draft Resolution (A/HRC/22/L.25) entitled “Protection of the Family”.

This Resolution tries, from our view, to cement the traditional family as a subject of human rights protection in and of itself. From this initiative may stem further efforts to oppose the protection and promotion of sexual and reproductive rights, and in particular issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, abortion, adolescents’ access to sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education.

All of these issues have been highly contested issues in the context of recent and prior negotiations at the Human Rights Council.

This is the first resolution of its kind at the UN Human Rights Council and as such could be the start of what will likely be a long-term incremental agenda at the Council.

It is unlikely that many delegations will vote against this resolution, given that most delegations do not want to be depicted as anti-family.

So, the realistic hope that we have is for concerns with the text to be fixed in whatever version is adopted by the Council.

In the single negotiation session that has taken place so far, a number of key delegations have spoken to address the problematic aspects of this resolution, including Uruguay, Mexico, the Netherlands (on behalf of the EU), and the United States. However, it is critical that further delegations voice their concerns with this text.

Particularly important Governments to voice these concerns are Members of the Human Rights Council (see list below) as well as a few key Observer States, including: South Africa and EU members such as Malta and Hungary.

What makes the draft resolution problematic?

The focus on “protection of the family” in the Resolution is not consistent with the Council’s mandate which is to promote and protect human rights.

International human rights law is primarily about the entitlements and freedoms of individuals; the family in and of itself is not a subject of human rights protection.

Within the Resolution, there is no recognition of the need to protect and promote the human rights of individuals within family contexts.

It is the individuals who have human rights entitlements, which can be violated within the family context. For example, it is well known that families are often a site of violence, especially towards women, children, and the elderly.

According to the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, domestic violence is the most pervasive form of violence against women.

Hence, the focus of this resolution must be the protection of the human rights of members of families.

There is no recognition in the Resolution of the fact that various forms of the family exist in all contexts.

This includes single-parent households, same-sex-parented households, joint families, extended families, families without children, families of divorced individuals, intergenerational families, etc.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Contact your country’s Foreign Ministry indicating your concerns with this Resolution and your expectation that they oppose the Resolution in its current form.

As action on this Resolution is expected to take place this coming Friday March 22nd, it is urgent for you to contact your government as soon as possible.

Contact details for the Foreign Ministry of each country can be found at:

http://www.ediplomat.com/dc/foreign_ministries.htm

You can also contact your permanent missions in Geneva directly by phone, fax or e-mail voicing the same concerns. A list of Geneva missions is available at: <http://tinyurl.com/t2cwt>

Please forward this action alert to other supportive NGOs.

There is a group of NGOs working together in Geneva to address this, including the International Commission of Jurists, the Sexual Rights Initiative, ARC-International, Baha’i International Community, COC – Netherlands, International Service for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch and others.

Human Rights Council Members (2013)

African States	Asian States
Angola	India
Benin	Indonesia
Botswana	Japan
Burkina Faso	Kazakhstan

Congo Côte d'Ivoire Ethiopia Gabon Kenya Libya Mauritania Sierra Leone Uganda	Kuwait Malaysia Maldives Pakistan Philippines Qatar Republic of Korea Thailand United Arab Emirates
Eastern European States Czech Republic Estonia Montenegro Poland Republic of Moldova Romania	Western Europe and Other States Austria Germany Ireland Italy Spain Switzerland United States of America
Latin American & Caribbean States Argentina Brazil Chile Costa Rica Ecuador Guatemala Peru Venezuela	

Sent to us by former IAW President Rosy Weiss

Hélène Sackstein writes:

The attacks led by Russia are an attack not just on women who are collateral damage but on the entire human rights system. It started with traditional values, where they didn't get their way, and continues with every entry point they can find.

I think that IAW should join the large mainstream HR NGOs on this one.

Please find attached the draft of the resolution at the HRC which was presented just before it was tabled (there was purposely no time to consult) and advice developed by a group of NGOs.

Hélène Sackstein, Chief Representative to the UN in Geneva

Note

There are two attachments: the (Russian) Resolution and a draft NGO Concerns, an advice developed by a group of NGOs - see the letter of Hélène Sackstein.

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