

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

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

**IAW NEWSLETTER - January 2002, nr. 1**

*Dear IAW members,*

*At the beginning of the year 2002 the Editorial Committee members send you their best wishes for a good, peaceful and healthy year! We will continue sending you news from all corners of the world in 2002 and we also would appreciate very much hearing from you. This year will be an interesting year, with many international problems to tackle and with some important summits coming up.*

*In this letter some good news from Afghanistan. The news about the progress of installing an International Criminal Court was not that good; the US Congress passed a prohibitive piece of legislation intended to undermine US co-operation with the future International Criminal Court. Important conferences like CSW, CEDAW and Sustainable Development are being seriously prepared for by IAW representatives – we could only put in a few quotations from their excellent reports, distributed in Vienna in this newsletter – there is more in IWNNews.*

*Women everywhere have to fight continuously for human rights for women and children. Also for implementing voting rights, but voting rights can, after 90 years of struggle, suddenly blossom up like they did in Japan. And if you get a bit stressed in 2002 because the world seems so complicated nowadays, think of the Lotus exercise out of Tai Chi!*



**Equal  
Rights**

### **The Lotus**

Wave hands  
Turtle treads water  
Snow rabbit ploughs and digs the earth  
Fair lady gathers and sprinkles water  
Flower buds form  
And the lotus flower blossoms  
  
Face the wind (left hand)  
Face the wind (right hand)  
Lift the sky  
Press the earth  
White crane spreads his wings (left hand)  
White crane spreads his wings (right hand)  
Rabbit digs the earth  
Wave hands

### **GOOD NEWS STORIES ABOUT AFGHANISTAN**

#### **Tajwar Kakar Rahim**

a story of determination and courage, by Pat Giles

Tajwar Kakar Rahim with her husband and seven children (aged then from five to thirty) arrived as refugees in Australia and settled in one of the northern suburbs of Perth in 1989. Educated in the days of the King, she had been married very young, but continued at school to acquire qualifications for teaching and administration and subsequently set up schools for boys and girls in many regions of Afghanistan.

During the Soviet occupation she became a Commander in the Mujahideen, was imprisoned and tortured and eventually fled for her life with her family, (the youngest being only days old) mostly on foot across the mountains to Peshawar in Pakistan.

There the family settled and Tajwar, braving the hostility of the Mullahs, finally gained their permission to establish schools for boys and girls in the refugee camps. Without, at first, any hindrance from the Pakistani authorities she travelled to Europe to explain the plight of her people

under the Soviet occupation, but by '89 her life was again under threat and the family fled for their lives to Australia. I was then a Senator in the Australian Parliament with an electorate office close to where Tajwar and her family settled. She and her beautiful children quickly made my acquaintance. I felt very honoured to do what I could to assist this very fine family and have watched the young people take good advantage of our systems to become valuable citizens of Australia.

Tajwar has only ever wanted to return to work with the oppressed people of her homeland but in the early '90s war was regularly flaring up, and her young family needed her. Later, specifically during the last two years, there seemed to be some opportunities opening up, so she acquired computer skills and began applying for positions with overseas aid agencies.

Subsequently, funded by the International Foundation of Hope, she and her younger son Timor (26) left Perth in July 2000 to travel to Kabul where she had been promised by the Taliban that she could start a school for orphan girls. In the circumstances she realised that she needed a male escort, and anyway she also needed to find a bride for Timor. Her attitude to the Taliban is that she deplored their interpretation of the Koran and their attitude to women but believed that she could work with them.

"They are very young", she told me, "and they listen to me". Initially, they reneged on the promise of a girls' school so Tajwar set up a school for orphan boys, trained local staff, (Timor taught them English), and set up classes in carpet making and other income-generating skills for widows. She travelled to the drought-stricken areas of

Afghanistan and wrote to me of the need for health facilities for women and children. In conjunction with the International Health Department of the Curtin University in Western Australia we had begun investigating funding sources for a clinic in one of the worst hit areas.

When at the end of a year in Kabul Tajwar was packing to go on leave, the Taliban called her in with a request to now begin classes for the orphan girls, and of course she commenced these immediately. At the sudden onset of war in September, Tajwar's first concern was to send Timor and his new young wife back to Australia, so all three travelled to Pakistan, her plan being to return to Kabul as soon as the young couple were on their way. Tajwar and all of her family became Australian citizens as soon as they qualified after arriving in Australia but obtaining a visa for Tim's wife in Pakistan was delayed until very recently, so the three of them were stuck in Peshawar, mercifully safe from the bombs falling on Kabul. Naturally, Tajwar has been among those distributing aid and giving support to the countless extra refugees who flooded into Pakistan.

Tajwar has never contemplated returning to Australia - ("There are 160 orphans in Kabul who depend upon me", she said when during a phone call I suggested that she could do with a break) - and has worked among the refugees in Peshawar awaiting the first opportunity to return to her charges.

The last few weeks have been very exciting for Tajwar. We spoke after the Bonn meeting and she could not have been more elated. A Pashtun and associate of the King and of the leader of the provisional administration and several of his ministers, particularly of education, she is drawing up plans to set up academies for those who have missed out on early education, especially girls.

Her most recent message to me is that the long awaited visa is assured and Timor will soon be back in Australia with his wife, while Tajwar leaves today (December 29th 2001) to return to Kabul to her orphans and to many others in need of her determination, energy and skills.

(I signed Tajwar up as a member of IAW before she left in July 2000 and make sure that she receives our journal via her family. Letters have been problematic but we mostly use faxes. There seems to be no email access as yet. Soon, perhaps.)

### **WHO international staff return to Afghanistan**

3 January 2002 – Geneva. Now that the security situation in Afghanistan is improving and the interim administration is established, WHO international staff, evacuated to Islamabad on the 12th of September, will return to Kabul effective today. International and national staff will also be returning to WHO sub-offices in Jalalabad, Mazari-I-Charif, Herat, Kandahar, Faizabad, Ghazni and Gunduz. WHO has eight sub-offices in Afghanistan and will have more than 200 international and local staff in the country once the return is completed.

The World Health Organisation, the Afghan Ministry of Public Health and the United Nations Children's Fund have kicked off a measles immunisation campaign to vaccinate nine million Afghan children between six months and twelve years of age. The three-month campaign began in Kabul on New Year's day and will continue countrywide, reaching displaced children as well as children in the most difficult areas to access.

## **UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

## **46th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women**

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women in New York prepared the following information for the benefit of international readers who are preparing for the meetings of the 46<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN CSW. Meetings listed below in March are in New York City, NY, USA. All meetings **require registration and some require fees.**

### ***Registration for meetings at the UN – March 4-15, 2002***

To attend the 46<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) your organisation must be in consultative status with ECOSOC and must register you with the UN Division for the Advancement of Women **no later than 15 January 2002.** Queries can be sent via email by your organisation to [csw46@un.org](mailto:csw46@un.org). Any changes to registration, including substitutions, must be submitted to the UN Division for the Advancement of Women by January 30. **There will be no exceptions.** The CSW meets from **March 4-15, 2002**

*An IAW delegation, headed by IAW President Patricia Giles, will attend CSW. The subjects are this year: 1) Eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle in a globalising world and 2) Environmental Management and the mitigation of natural disasters, a gender perspective. See also [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/)*

## **HUMAN RIGHTS : WOMEN AND CHILDREN**

### **IAW and CEDAW**

As the CEDAW Committee met on the 2d - 20th July 2001, the call for women's human rights and the implementation of the Articles of CEDAW is being increasingly heard and considered on the same level as the other Human Rights Conventions. Today there is, indeed, a universal movement for women's rights. While the concept of sovereignty of nations is still in place, there is a strong move to establish universal norms of behaviour. In this light, CEDAW has built up a kind of jurisprudence through its recommendations. The CEDAW Committee has also entered into adulthood with an accompany level of maturity. The Committee's method of work has improved over the years. This is particularly evident when it examines the initial country report in a non-combative style which is challenging, but not confrontational, based on their "expertise" and the Convention's mandate.

From September 19th to October 5th, 2001 a treaty ratification/signature event took at achieving universal ratification of the UN treaties relating to women.

Twenty-three treaties have been singled out for special attention in this context. Central amongst these are CEDAW and its Optional Protocol, but emphasis is also placed on the twin Conventions, on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children are also included in the event.

*From a background report on CEDAW activities by Kay Fraleigh, IAW UN Representative in New York and Johanna E. Sterbin, FIFC, distributed in Vienna.*

*The next session of CEDAW is in August: [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/)*

### **UNICEF welcomes signing of two conventions on children by South Asian leaders**

Kathmandu / New York, 5 January 2002 - UNICEF today welcomed the signing of two important conventions on the trafficking of women and children and child welfare by seven South Asian nations. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka signed the conventions this week at a summit of South Asian leaders in Kathmandu, Nepal.

UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy congratulated the South Asian leaders for addressing children's and women's issues at a time when their nations are grappling with the dual threats of war and terrorism in the region. She welcomed their commitment and said that lasting peace and stability could not be achieved without respect for human rights, including the full rights of children and women. The trafficking of children and women for sexual exploitation is on the increase in South Asia - a result of poverty, deeply-rooted social and gender discrimination, weak legislation and spotty enforcement. The conventions signed this week by South Asian Heads of State and Government deplore the "evil of trafficking in women and children" as a "violation of basic human rights".

Now that they have signed them, UNICEF urged the governments of South Asia to ratify the conventions, as well as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, which so far has been signed only by Nepal and Bangladesh, and ratified by Bangladesh alone.

### **IAW and other NGO's on the Girl Child**

Girl trafficking must be considered and punished as a crime.

In no case should a girl child be married against her wishes or sold as a slave or a wife.

She has *the right to be protected against early pregnancy*, to receive a sexual education making her able to master fecundity and to protect herself against sexually transmitted diseases.

The collaboration of parents, first children educators, is essential for a better application of those rights. Parents must be informed and involved in their implementation.

From early childhood, she must be taught that the female sex is in no way inferior to the male sex.

There is no "second sex"; there are human beings with different sexes, equal in right and dignity.

*From the Manifesto, produced by the working group "GIRL CHILD", NGO/UNESCO Collective Consultation on the Status of Women, distributed in Vienna.*

## **INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT**

### **US Opposition to International Criminal Court slightly weakened**

US Congress backs away from passing strong anti-ICC legislation

The United States House and Senate agreed in conference committee yesterday to reject the Senate's American Servicemembers' Protection Act (ASPA). In its place, Congress has passed the House's Hyde Amendment, a weaker yet likewise prohibitive piece of legislation intended to undermine US co-operation with the future International Criminal Court (ICC) by barring use of Defence Department funds for any related activities. Senator Helms has now made several attempts to pass the ASPA. Previous versions have included the prohibition of US military aid to countries other than key US allies that have ratified the ICC treaty. All versions have contained a clause granting the President permission to use "all means necessary and appropriate" to release US or allied personnel from detention by the ICC, which will be located in the Hague, the Netherlands. The ASPA, which would have become permanently binding legislation had it been accepted by the House, did allow a broad waiver, at the will of the President, of all of its operative provisions. While the Hyde Amendment does not contain such waivers, it will expire at the end of fiscal year 2002.

New York, December 21, 2001. See also <http://www.igc.org/icc/html/HydeAmendment.html>

### **IAW and other NGOs at the International Criminal Court**

NGOs have been recognised for their valuable contribution at the Preparatory Committee for the International Criminal Court. In an extraordinary display of confidence by the UN during the session 24 September – 5 October 2001, NGO representatives of the Coalition on the International Criminal Court came to New York and were able to attend the meetings at UN Headquarters which were closed to all other NGOs following the tragic events of September 11th.

The International Criminal Court will become operative when 60 states have ratified the Rome Statute. To date, 139 nations have signed the Statute and 43 have ratified the treaty. The list of ratifications includes countries from Andorra to the Republic of Yugoslavia; the latest important additions to the list were Nigeria and the United Kingdom. This means two of the permanent members of the Security Council have now ratified the treaty: France and the United Kingdom.

The focus of the Women's Caucus was on advocacy for women's human rights. In particular on:

- 1) The overarching principle of gender justice – The application and interpretation of law must be without adverse distinction on the basis of gender as well consistent with evolving standards of rights.
- 2) Sexual and gender violence crimes – Sexual violence is no longer an "offence against honour" but among the gravest offences against humanity as well as a form of torture and inhuman treatment. Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilisation and other sexual violence are explicitly included among the war crimes against humanity within the Court's jurisdiction. Trafficking and gender persecution are also crimes against humanity (etc. etc.).

*Kay Fraleigh, IAW representative at the UN in New York, in her report for Vienna (a selection).*

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### **Rio + 10 - Sustainable Development - the Johannesburg Summit**

Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002, with the participation of heads of State and Government during the period 2 to 4 September.

The tenth session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (known as CSD10) is acting as the global Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the Johannesburg Summit. Four inter-governmental PrepCom meetings are being held during 2001-2002 to agree on the agenda for the Summit. The First Summit Preparatory Committee (PrepCom 1) was held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 31 April to 2 May 2001. PrepCom 2 will be held from 28 January to 8 February 2002 in New York, followed by PrepCom 3, also in New York, from 25 March to 5 April 2002. The final PrepCom, at the Ministerial level, will be held in Indonesia from 27 May to 7 June 2002.

Representatives from each of the major groups, including leaders from NGO and business communities, are also participating in these meetings.

### ***IAW and other NGOs discussing the Summit at Geneva***

More than 80 NGOs from the entire UN ECE region met on September 22 and 23 in Geneva, to discuss the negotiations and the Draft Ministerial Declaration for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg 2002. The NGO statement initially did not mention a gender perspective (!!!), wrote Maria Anna Knothe in her report for Vienna. A Women's Caucus statement was prepared and distributed, an oral statement delivered in the Ministerial meeting. A quotation: "We women form a significant proportion of the workforce and sustain the majority of households and communities. We are consumers and producers, and make many relevant decisions. However, the socio-economic positions of women are not equal to those of men and our perspectives, knowledge and visions are not adequately taken into account. Therefore the implementation of the measures articulated in chapter 24 of Agenda 21: 'Global Action for Women towards Sustainable and Equitable Development' is still relevant. This includes ratifications of all legal frameworks, such as CEDAW and its additional Protocols, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Beijing +5 Document, as well as the provision of equal access to and equal participation of decision-making and resources."

*From a paper by Maria Anna Knothe, IAW convenor of the UN NGO Working Group on Women on the ECE Region, distributed in Vienna. See also: [www.johannesburgsummit.org/](http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/)*

### **The International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD): 18-22 March 2002, Monterrey, Mexico. Final PrepCom: 14-25 January 2002, New York.**

In 2002, the United Nations will convene for the first time a summit-level meeting to address key financial and related issues pertaining to global development. An unprecedented feature of the FFD process is the active participation of the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO, as well as representatives of civil society and the business sector. In Monterrey, countries will be represented by finance and foreign ministries. Six key areas have been identified.

The new draft of the Facilitator's final outcome paper for the International Conference on Financing for Development is now available. The 10 page paper is entitled "Confronting the Challenge of Financing for Development: A Global Response". The paper will be the core document for the final PrepCom Session 14-25 January 2002 in New York. See [www.un.org/esa/ffd/](http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/)

### **IAW 32nd Congress, SRI LANKA**

Lakshmi Pereira, President of Sri Lanka Women's Conference who attended the International Meeting in Vienna, warmly invites IAW members from all over the world to the 32nd IAW Congress in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 14 – 22 September 2002. We were so fortunate to have a look at the proposal for the programme of the Congress and we can tell you: it looks fine! The Congress Theme is a challenging one: "New Frontiers for a New Age". More news in the next newsletter.

For the time being, please put the date in your diary and put your piggybank on the windowsill to save for the 32nd IAW Congress in Colombo, Sri Lanka!

### **Around the world for Women's Voting Rights, 1911-1912**

We found a charming website at [www.alettajacobs.org/wereldreis/index.html](http://www.alettajacobs.org/wereldreis/index.html). It is in Dutch but it has a lovely layout, well worth looking at. Two outstanding IAW women, Carrie Chapman Catt, President

of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and Aletta Jacobs from the Dutch Vereniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht, travelled in 1911 and 1912 all over the world to fight for Women's voting rights outside Europe. What makes this website so special and lively is the way the travelling story is linked with pictures, a document, a funny incident etc. In this way our historic heritage can become part of our own way of life.

They went to Japan, China, Indonesia, India, Africa, Canada, the US and Latin America. Everywhere they told big audiences that women have a right to vote! On the last part of their voyage around the world, in 1912, they stayed a few weeks in Japan, speaking at many occasions. Telling their audiences that their fight was not against men, but against prejudices, narrow-mindedness and being self-satisfied for both sexes, men and women.

There is a story that should be verified, of a Japanese woman, who got so angry because the press never put anything in the newspapers about voting rights for women, that she threw a stone through the window of a newspaper office. The next day all the Japanese newspapers wrote about this outrageous act of a woman and also 'why'. This incident changed Aletta Jacob's strategy. Instead of being dignified and ladylike, the Dutch suffragettes went on the street with big demonstrations, to demand voting rights for women.

### **Women's Voting Rights in Japan**

The IAW audience in Vienna was very pleased when IAW Vice-President Sachiko Okumura told how, for the first time in July 2001, women in Japan were appointed to top political posts, with five women ministers in the Koizumu Cabinet and three women governors. The electoral system in Japan is a complicated one for outsiders to understand, but we all recognised the happy result of a good campaign after years and years of diligently pushing for political acknowledgement of women. Congratulations!

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Note: to avoid misunderstanding, we always send the IAW Newsletter twice, 1) in the body of the e-mail, and 2) as an attachment, saved in Word 6.0/95. Both have exactly the same content. The only difference is, that the attachment has a better lay-out, so it will be easy for Affiliates to copy it and send it by post to IAW members without e-mail.

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.

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International Alliance of Women / Alliance Internationale des Femmes

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