

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

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

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

**IAW NEWSLETTER July 2009, no. 7**



**Equal Rights**

*Dear IAW members,*

*An important time for the coming General Assembly of ECOSOC, the UN Economic and Social Council. On the agenda are decisions to be taken on several women's issues.*

*One issue we mention with pride - maternal mortality – which has been in preparation over three years by H el ene Sackstein, IAW representative at the UN Human Rights Council in collaboration with other NGOs.*

*Also in this newsletter - Women in Politics in India and in Europe, news from the Greek League for Women's Rights, the problem with the shortage of workers in health care in Africa and what is mobile health or mHealth?. You will find coming events, reports etc. as usual at the end.*

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL - ECOSOC**

Humanitarian assistance

Geneva July 20 - 22 - For three days the Economic and Social Council held a general discussion on strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance.

Speaking on the first day were representatives of the delegations of Sweden on behalf of the European Union, Canada on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, Russian Federation, Malaysia, Brazil, Switzerland, Sudan, India, Peru, Indonesia, Pakistan, China, Norway, El Salvador, and the Holy See.

The whole discussion can be read on <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/> then click on News and Media. We quote here just two statements:

*JOHN HOLMES, Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief:*

*In 2009, complex emergencies had taken an even heavier toll than in previous years. While long-running and intractable conflicts such as those in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the occupied Palestinian territories, and Somalia continued to affect millions, outbreak of conflict in Pakistan, and the end game of the long running conflict in Sri Lanka had disrupted the lives of hundreds of thousands more*

*SUSAN ECKEY (Norway):*

*The many violations of humanitarian law that had been seen during the last few years, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, gave cause for grave concern. The targeting of civilians, lack of respect for humanitarian law principles, and the use of sexual violence as a method of warfare were just a few examples of the serious challenges, with grave humanitarian consequences that posed a threat to peace and development.*

***On the second day Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon outlined a series of measures designed to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and related crimes against humanity. The proposals are contained in a report, which the 192-member Assembly will consider on the third day.***

There are three pillars: 1. State responsibility; 2. international assistance and capacity-building; and 3. timely and decisive response. *The report is to be found on:*

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/206/10/PDF/N0920610.pdf?OpenElement>

## INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN

For three years Hélène Sackstein, IAW representative at the UN Human Rights Council, has worked with other NGOs to produce the following statement. It has now been unanimously accepted and will be presented at ECOSOC.

### INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN

This statement is endorsed by the organizations whose names are listed on the attached annex

### PREVENTABLE MATERNAL MORTALITY AND MORBIDITY

A human rights issue

### ECOSOC SESSION 2009 – Item 14 (g) Human rights

Hélène Sackstein – International Alliance of Women

We give you only the header here. The whole text will soon be published on the IAW website under the IAW Health Commission, at <http://www.womenalliance.org> - click on Commissions and Health. *Hélène, you did us proud!*

*Convenor of the IAW Health Commission: Gudrun Haupter*

### Greek League for Women's Rights

The content of the latest edition of the wonderful Journal of IAW Affiliate, the Greek League for Women's Rights, focusses on the participation of women candidates at the European election and the 50/50 campaign of the EWL. Interesting also is an article about women in high managerial posts, with all the barriers they face.

Like other years, there was an annual award to journalists. Two journalists this year, one from the press and one from the electronic media. Maria Delithanassi from the Athens 'Katherimini' and Stelios Kouloglou from the newly established 'Six Web TV' received honorary prizes from Mrs Evghenia Tsoumani, General Secretary for Equality.

League President Soula Panaretou told the audience: "We fight for substantial equality in conditions of economic crisis". And former IAW President Alice Yotopoulos-Marangopoulos reviewed the significant achievements of the women's movement in the past year.

## WOMEN IN POLITICS AND DECISION MAKING

### India - Why Affirmative Action?

#### All parties show a palpable bias against women at the top

The dissension over the reservation of seats for women in Parliament has brought out some curious aspects of negotiation and bargaining in our political life. On the face of it, all political parties are in favour of reservation, and none will speak against it openly. But much lies beneath the surface, and it is necessary to understand the inner dynamics underlying the different positions adopted.

#### Quotas within quotas?

*Uma Bharati has declared that she is strongly in favour of quotas for women, and has been asking for quotas to the extent of 50 per cent, which is well above what the proposed bill provides for. However, there is a rider. She wants a proportion of the reserved seats to be earmarked specifically for women belonging to the backward communities. Some would also like a certain proportion to be earmarked for women belonging to the religious minorities.*

The demand for quotas within the quotas for women has been made by several political leaders, most notably Mulayam Singh Yadav. His argument cannot be dismissed out of hand. He believes that without specified earmarks of the kind he advocates, the seats reserved for women will be monopolized by upper-caste, middle-class women who are better educated and politically more adroit than women from the backward castes and communities.

Given the prominence of the ties of family and marriage in our society, the fear is not entirely without basis.

#### A palpable bias

The concerned citizen may be forgiven for suspecting a certain lack of good faith in the negotiation and bargaining among political parties over reservations for women. He is bound to ask why political leaders who are so keen to declare their support for a better representation of women have done so little to ensure a more prominent place for them in their own parties.

To be sure, there are some women in every political party, but their presence becomes thinner as we move up the organizational hierarchy of the party. All political parties show a palpable bias against women at the top, although some show it more markedly than others.

#### **Needed: affirmative action**

What we need is affirmative action that will help women to act more extensively against the prevalent bias so as to develop their own unrecognized and unutilized potential. Here the political party has an important catalytic role to play. Equality of opportunity, it has been said, depends not just on the removal of disabilities but also on the creation of abilities.

The disabilities imposed upon women for centuries have been eased to some extent, but their abilities have not been given much chance to grow. Wherever, in the school or university, they have been given the chance to grow, women have done as well as men.

It has been easier for women to rise to the top in a university or even a bank than in any political party, except where there was a connection by family or marriage.

#### **Evading the responsibilities**

Most political parties, and not just the communist parties, have a poor record in this respect. Their clamour for quotas for women is mainly a way of evading the responsibility to do what needs to be done to enable women to come into their own in the political domain.

*By André Béteille, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics and National Research. Editor's note: this is a selection. More on:*

[http://www.telegraphindia.com/1090702/jsp/opinion/story\\_11182369.jsp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1090702/jsp/opinion/story_11182369.jsp)

*Sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu*

#### **Lobbying Action - No Modern European Democracy without Gender Equality**

The European Women's Lobby: On the forthcoming nominations: Commissioners, New European Parliament President, Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Parliaments Committees

The recent European elections led to a slight progress in the representation of women in the European Parliament (EP), which now reaches about 35% (compared to about 30% at the beginning of the 1999-2004 term) but still doesn't attain parity or even the 40% of women threshold agreed by Member States of the Council of Europe.

The EWL is proposing a system of nomination of Commissioners whereby each Member State would propose **a woman and a man as nominate Commissioners in 2009**. The President would then choose among them with a view to achieve an equal representation of women and men.

Several European Commissioners have reacted positively to this idea and some political parties at Member State level have also put forward such a system.

Two examples of letters in English and French:

\* one to the leaders of the main political parties in your country and to the leaders of the European parties in the European parliament (EP) and to the European Parliament, and

\* the second one to the head of your state / government,

are to be found on the website of the EWL on: <http://www.womenlobby.org/site/hp.asp?langue=EN>:

*Joanna Manganara, IAW Regional Coordinator Europe and Representative to the European Women's Lobby, urges the European organisations to **take action immediately!***

*And please, be so kind to write IAW secretary Lene Pind if you did so!*

#### **Mobile health, or mHealth**

The UN has been launching, on the 1st of July 2009, a ten-day initiative intended to reach out to 10,000 people in Uganda through mobile phones to demonstrate the reach and potential use of mobile phones in health information and promotion. The initiative, "Texting4Health" will invite residents of Uganda's second largest commercial city of Jinja to participate in a short health quiz using text messages. These messages are free to the consumer and are designed to serve a public health information campaign.

#### **Health quiz**

Texting4Health will use the same approach as two previous programs for HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention campaigns in Uganda. The results of the Texting4Health demonstration will be shared with Ministers of UN Member States at the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) session of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in Geneva in July 2009.

#### **Text to Change**

The initiative is sponsored by UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) and the Uganda Ministry of Health. Text to Change (TTC), a Dutch non-profit organization, will provide its mobile telephony platform. They will send out SMS (short message service) questions on health prevention and promotion provided by the World Health Organization to 10,000 mobile subscribers. Prior to that, TTC will inform the public with announcements via SMS and other media.

*More on:* <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/156174.php>

See the video with UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman on <http://www.texttochange.com/>

#### **HEALTH-AFRICA - Where To Find A Million New Nurses?**

Cape Town - July 21 - Fifth International AIDS Society (IAS) Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention in Cape Town.

Shortage of skills and human resources has been lamented in Africa for many years, especially since qualified health personnel has been leaving in large numbers to work in developed countries for better pay. But little has been done to improve the situation.

#### **37 percent of doctors leaving**

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 37 percent of doctors trained in South Africa are working in the developed world. South African trained nurses made up almost a tenth of the workforce in Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States.

"Task-shifting and community involvement are critical to fill the gap in skills and personnel," explained Professor Alan Whiteside, director of the Health Economics and HIV/AIDS Research Division (HEARD) of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Whiteside is pointing to the example of Malawi, where well-trained community care workers have been successfully taking on nursing responsibilities in homes and clinics to ease the workload of nurses and doctors.

#### **Good work in Lesotho**

This also has been successfully done in Lesotho, where Scott Hospital started a nurse-initiated and managed ARV and HIV care programme for adults and children of the health district. Scott Hospital, which is located in Lesotho's western lowlands, has 14 associated clinics, which service more than 900 villages.

While one doctor used to service the entire health district - Lesotho suffers severe health worker shortage with an average of five doctors and 63 nurses per 100,000 patients - now almost a hundred nurses and lay health workers attend to patients.

#### **A mammoth task**

"It was a mammoth task. We have high HIV infection due to 23.2 percent HIV prevalence combined with very limited human resources.

We had to be very innovative and decentralise HIV care," explained Scott Hospital medical superintendent Dr Lipontso Makakole.

#### **Nurse-friendly guidelines**

The Scott Hospital team developed nurse-friendly HIV care guidelines and implemented task-shifting: while nurses received clinical management skills to take over tasks from doctors, lay counsellors were trained to do counselling, adherence training and antiretroviral (ARV) treatment preparation to free up nurses.

They also trained a new cadre of specialised HIV/TB counsellors.

"As a result, we initiated 37 percent more patients onto ARVs in 2008," said Makakole. "80 percent of adults and 89 percent of children remained in HIV care. Those are very favourable outcomes that show that nurse-led HIV care works."

*By Kristin Palitza. Editor's note: this is a selection. More on:*

<http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=47747>

#### **Commission on the Status of Women**

Any individual, non-governmental organization, group or network may submit communications (complaints/appeals/petitions) to the Commission on the Status of Women containing information relating to alleged violations of human rights that affect the status of women in any country in the

world.

The Commission on the Status of Women considers such communications as part of its annual programme of work in order to identify emerging trends and patterns of injustice and discriminatory practices against women for purposes of policy formulation and development of strategies for the promotion of gender equality. Deadline: 14 August 2009

On: [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/communications\\_procedure.html#where](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/communications_procedure.html#where)

*If you send in a communication, please be so kind to inform IAW secretary Lene Pind.*

## **EVENTS - REPORTS - BOOKS & LINKS - CONFERENCES**

15 September 2009, UN Headquarters - [General Assembly, 64th session](#)

The 64th session of the UN General Assembly will convene on Tuesday, 15 September 2009.

The General Debate will be held 23 – 26 and 28 – 30 September 2009.

22 September 2009, UN Headquarters - High-level Event on Climate Change

The Secretary-General will host an all-day high-level event on climate change for Heads of State and Government, one day before the opening of the general debate of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

For the English and French speaking among us: have a look at the newsletters of the United Nations Democracy Fund. The January newsletter has a transparent overview of funding per country - the April newsletter has a project list. All in an excellent lay-out.

On: [http://www.un.org/democracyfund/Docs/UNDEF\\_Update\\_2.pdf](http://www.un.org/democracyfund/Docs/UNDEF_Update_2.pdf)

UNIFEM previews book highlighting personal accounts of HIV-positive women

Bangkok – UNIFEM is publishing a book entitled “Diamonds: Stories of Women from the Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV” as part of its mandate to empower positive women leaders through capacity building of positive women’s networks.

For Media Inquiries please contact: Supapohn Kanwerayotin, Communications Officer  
<Supapohn.kanwerayotin[at]unifem.org>

13 - 31 July, Geneva Human Rights Committee, 96th Session: Tanzania, Netherlands, Chad, Azerbaijan, Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico, New Zealand, Uzbekistan

On: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/hrcs96.htm>

21 September 2009 - [International Day of Peace 2009](#)

Leading up to this year's International Day of Peace, the UN is raising awareness of the dangers and costs of nuclear weapons with the "WMD – We Must Disarm" campaign on Twitter, Facebook and MySpace.

IAW Newsletter / News Flash : Joke Sebus

<iaw.newsletter@inter.nl.net>

International Women's News : Priscilla Todd (English)

<iaw.iwnews@womenalliance.org>

: Mathilde Duval (French)

<aifnfi@womenalliance.org>

Membership Officer

: Pat Richardson

<iaw.membership@womenalliance.org>

Treasurer

: Rakesh Dawan

<iaw.treas@womenalliance.org>