

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

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

**IAW NEWSLETTER - June 2000**



**Equal Rights**

Dear IAW members,

*This newsletter is made up of comments and extracts from New York about Beijing +5 received from Joke Sebus, Pat Giles and Jessica Kehl-Lauff. Other IAW members in New York included Kay Fraleigh, Terpse Lambrinopoulou, Anje Wiersinga and Irini Sarlis. After all her hard work, Joke is having a well earned holiday in the US so Priscilla Todd is putting this newsletter together and hopes that it makes interesting reading for all those who were not able to be in New York. It includes Joke's first impressions, followed by an account of a workshop - MEN, LAW and POLITICS – organised by IAW and the International Federation of Women in Legal Careers. There are some interesting and pithy extracts from the daily paper "Watchdog" of the Youth Caucus. An article by Joke about THE DOCUMENT gives us a graphic idea of the hard work, the frustrations and the final outcome. Pat Giles then briefly sums it all up.*

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS** from Joke Sebus [dated 7 June]

This morning I went to the meeting of the NGOs from Europe, Some of them are of the opinion: rather have no document instead of a weak document. The decision has been postponed till tomorrow morning and we will all try to lobby our governments for items that must be in the document. They are: sexual and reproductive rights; diversity of sexual orientation; sex education for girls; autonomy of NGOs (this is threatened by the 'bad' governments because they don't like the monitoring of their programs); violence - in particular domestic violence; health: services and care; equality in each kind of family; the disabled; and overall a civil dialogue because the EU countries don't want an international follow-up but regional only. Denmark and Italy are the exceptions. Our own country did not want to put even half a sentence in the speech of the secretary about Equality and she followed the advice of her civil servants (booh!). I will join a workshop with Finland at three o'clock - - they are preparing a declaration.

The workshops which are wrestling with the language have a deadline of four o'clock in the morning! Today is the day for all days for the character of the Special Session document. The NGOs are grumbling because of the lack of information and I must say that we, as a women's movement, feel a bit lost inside the immense UN construction. In Beijing and in Nairobi in particular we were more in our own women's world, inspiring each other. Today I was up early to try to get one of the 50 tickets for sitting on the tribune of the General Assembly. They promised later we all could sit there but no, women with tickets only. I heard speeches by Ministers of Equality or whatever of Zimbabwe, Tajikistan, Lebanon (a woman got big applause mentioning the aggression of Israel), Singapore, Mexico, the Philippines, Brazil, Sri Lanka. They were all women except for Zimbabwe and

Tajikistan. It is my impression that the NGOs of the Latin American countries have progressed a lot since Beijing. Interesting also is the role of the World Bank which enters into debate with NGOs, many from countries badly in need of money for women's problems.

## **WOMEN, LAW and POLITICS**

### **a Workshop of the International Alliance of Women and the International Federation of Women in Legal Careers**

A most inspiring workshop took place on June 8th at the Church Center in New York. Outside the NGOs were protesting in front of the UN building against the slow process of adopting the Special Session document. Inside the Church Center a forum of lawyers and politicians discussed with us the subject of this workshop.

IAW President Patricia Giles took us through the four previous Women's World Conferences of the last 25 years. The Tribunal in Mexico in 1975, where 6000 women from all over the world met for the first time, was an extraordinary event. The possibility of working together on women's issues became immediately evident. There was a program for the Tribunal but there was nothing in it about women's rights, health, education, violence and so on. The women attending were absolutely enraged. Groups got typewriters and paper and carbon paper and started writing their own plan of action. It was just a beginning. They had the intention: let's go back home and start working on national and local governments, NGOs, etc. The press was not so friendly about the Tribunal and ridiculed it with: 'Mum is the word' and 'The yak yak begins'.

In Copenhagen women took a big step forward. CEDAW was adopted in 1979, coming into force in 1981, being ratified now by 165 states. Women's issues were put into a structure and discussed. All those attending were convinced that the area of human rights needed serious attention. And the word of what women were trying to do spread out. UNICEF, for example, designed a poster of women with twins, a boy and a girl, the latter underfed and miserable, with the slogan: It is not a Crime to be born a Woman.

In Nairobi in 1985 the 12 areas of concern were put into words in the Forward Looking Strategies and at the end was adopted by the attending nations. The strategies were updated and followed-up by the Plan for Action (PfA) of Beijing in 1995.

The implementation of the PfA is now at the centre of discussion at the Special Session of Beijing +5. Although it is a privilege to be here, it is a bit overwhelming. The slow process seems a terrible waste of time, but we must not forget 189 nations are attending, some of them for the first time; each with its own culture, economic position and level of development. Maybe some of them did not even think much about the status and position of women. However, we have to keep in mind that every little step forward will be spread out over 189 nations.

Mme Claire Jordan, avocat à la Cour de Paris and an honorary member of the Supreme Court of All India, sketched with great humour the career of herself as a lawyer, starting in the 1950s in family law, which was unusual for a woman at that time, switching first to business law and after that to politics. She illuminated her speech by describing some disastrous traps that at all times should be avoided if you want to have a career as a lawyer and a politician. Jessica Kehl described the difference between policy-making bodies of the ECOSOC like a) the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), meeting annually in March in Geneva and serviced by the Office of the High Commissioner Mary Robinson, see [www.unhchr.ch](http://www.unhchr.ch) and b) the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), see [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/) and c) treaty bodies that are established and are monitoring 'their' human rights treaty, building the so called conventional mechanisms.

Beside the most important treaty body for women, CEDAW Committee, you will find the Human Rights Committee (HCR), Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), Committee against Torture (CAT), Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), Committee on the Rights of the Child (CHR). A paper, explaining all this, was distributed.

The USA still has not ratified CEDAW or the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights or the Convention on the Right of the Child! This omission was, by the way, mentioned several times during the Special Session, with our American sisters complaining too and explaining why. The Optional Protocol to CEDAW of 1999 has now been signed by 65 states but unhappily ratified only by three countries: Namibia, Senegal and Denmark. It will only come into force when it is ratified by 10 countries. **So all IAW 79 member organisations are asked to lobby for ratification in their countries.** You will find everything on [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw)

Jessica told us to read legal documents carefully. For example, the trafficking of persons – like we understand all trafficking of women and children being sold for slavery – could be mistaken as “smuggling of persons across borders” thus making the victim a criminal!

A paper on current initiatives against trafficking - a challenge to governments and NGOs - written by Patricia Giles after a three day meeting in Manila, was distributed. This paper, like the one mentioned above, is also well worth reading.

The workshop was honoured by the presence of Esther Hymer, 102 years old women’s rights activist, member of IAW and BPW as the doyen of the ongoing fight for our rights. Other contributions came from the President of the FIFCJ, Denise Scotto and Mme Claire Jourdan as well as from our beloved Kay Fraleigh, Honorary Vice-President and permanent representative of IAW to the UN in New York, who receives IAW members always so warmly in New York. The lively discussion was followed by more than 60 women lawyers, judges and even some state representatives working in law departments.

## **YOUTH CAUCUS**

The following are selections from their daily paper called: ' Watchdog'

**Jaw-dropping 45 minutes** volume 3, Issue 3, June 5, 2000

You are bound to have seen the yellow T-shirts. During the Prepcom in March, youth in support of the Beijing PfA organised themselves under the name of Youth for Women's Rights. The young people in this group come from more than 60 different countries. It is an initiative of the Youth Coalition for the ICPD, the Latin American and Caribbean Youth Network on Sexual and Reproductive Rights, the Network of Asia Pacific Youth (NAPY), the African Youth Network and the CSW Youth Caucus in support of BPfA. The Y4WR have already produced new language for the Contact Group on Health and organised the closing ceremony for Saturday's NGO Working Session. Be prepared for more!

Co-chair Misako reported on the proceedings of the hours and hours of toil that the Contact group put in. Five paragraphs in 45 minutes. That has to be a record of sorts. The main objection was by Pakistan on 131(a) on states of origin, transit and destination with reference to the ongoing negotiations on the draft protocol of the UN Convention on Transnational Organised Crime. Philippines, however, dug in its heels on specific reference to the states origin, transit and destination. The reworded paragraph has been split and reads as follows: 131(a) Intensify cooperation between states of origin, transit and destination to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children.



131(b) Support the ongoing negotiations on the draft protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, which supplements the UN Convention on Transnational Organised Crime.

The pace of the working group can still be compared to the snail family.

**Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil** volume 3, Issue 7, June 9, 2000  
**the (Dis)United Nations or "When there is no agreement stick to the PfA"**

Things went from bad to worse here last night, as the negotiations process finally slammed headlong into the brick wall of constraint. After a fruitless Thursday morning and an only slightly more productive afternoon and evening, the process ground to a halt in the wee hours of this morning. Drastic shortcuts were taken because of time constraint to speed up the negotiating process.

Just before the start of negotiations in the night, NGOs had one moment of happiness resulting in loud applause from the balcony. This joy was caused by the comments of the chairperson urging the delegates to revert to the Beijing PfA when consensus could not be achieved. This happiness was shortlived and ended as soon as the negotiations began.

Unfortunately this informal decision was used several times as a justification and a lame excuse to reject progressive language that went beyond Beijing PfA. For instance, in paragraph 20 regarding the achievements on the human rights of women, there was an endless discussion because the paragraph contained a line on sexual orientation which was proposed by JUSCANZ. Some countries, such as Senegal, wanted to delete the whole paragraph because they don't accept the term sexual orientation stating that that it was not in the Beijing+5 PfA. One of the suggested solutions to this dispute was to replace the discrimination based on sexual orientation with the list of discriminations contained within the Universal Declaration Of Human Rights.

By the end of this inconclusive discussion on sexual orientation, translation also came to a halt causing a new problem that took centre stage of the house. Finally, the delegates decided to stay at the plenary and continue with the discussion without interpretation. At this point there were achievements, as one encouraging paragraph was passed that included the phrasing 'adolescents continue to lack the education and services needed to enable them to deal in a positive and responsible way with their sexuality'.

It is probable that this achievement was not noticed by many people because soon after a new discussion on abortion was started. Most countries noted that abortion is a public health concern and efforts are needed to reduce recourse to abortion. Consensus was not close on this issue and after more than an hour of discussion, no compromise had been reached. A decision was made at this point to return to return to the small working groups and try and get to a quicker resolution of this issue. Whether this course will remain to be seen by the end of the day.

Regardless, the ever vigilant Youth Coalition for ICPD will be back, bright and early, in the halls of the UN to keep our eyes open for dangerous last minute tradeoffs and to encourage governments to put their lasts bits of remaining energy into producing a quality document that gives meaning to this whole process and honour to the phrase Beijing+5!

**THE DOCUMENT** from Joke Sebus

At last a happy end for the document of the Special Session. It was accepted by 180 nations after many and long and sometimes strenuous meetings, with verbal confusions, linguistic salvos and on occasion even with battles of political will. Compliments must go to all the Chairpersons, and in particular of Working group 2, for their endless patience and humour during the long sittings. Compliments too to the members of the Contact group, who had to check the content of the articles with previous ones and who also had to try to find 'language' acceptable to all delegations. This Special Session was a different conference and quite unlike the four previous ones. For instance, during the previous 5 years the international political front had changed. There was JUSCANZ - Japan, USA, Canada, Australia, Norway and New Zealand; EU - most countries of the European Union; G77 and China - a big cluster with 133 countries; SLAC - the Latin American countries; and about 30 others in a (the rest) group, including Russia, Eastern Europe, the Central Asian countries and the Holy See. From the beginning delegations of the Holy See, a handful of Roman Catholic countries and a few hard-line Muslim countries, had let it be known that they would be raising many of the same objections they raised to the language of the Beijing Conference of 1995 and the Population and Development Conference in Cairo.

Also, the number of NGOs with consultative status to ECOSOC had grown enormously. At previous conferences with a (small) number of NGO delegations with consultative status, delegates were offered special seating in the conference rooms, with writing paper and even a glass of water. This was of course not possible with 1400 NGO delegations, each with two or three delegates. A count at the start of the conference showed 800 NGO members from the USA, 800 from Europe, 500 from Africa and 500 from Asia, 300 from Latin America and 100 from the Middle East.

In the plenary the national delegations sat in groups, with a JUSCANZ, EU, G77 and China and SLAC group. Each had one speaker per group, although delegations could intercept. The exception was the (the rest) group, with speakers speaking for their sole and one nation only. The chairpersons treated every speaker with courtesy - as a distinguished speaker - but maybe you can imagine how we felt, as onlookers on the balcony, if such a 'distinguished' speaker weakened or deleted articles which were so important to us, NGO members! The corridors were filled with women from all over the world, often in beautiful and colourful dresses. They brought kilos and kilos of paper with information, policy statements or announcements of workshops. The daily briefings on the document were well attended; there was a daily newspaper and a very helpful team at the Internetcafe. It was great to be there and to talk about subjects with others.

On the other hand, lobbying was not always easy, due to the clustered delegation groups and the late or early morning hours. At the end, when the decision about the 'language' of the document took so much time, the whole process became frustrating because many of us had to leave before knowing what and how this conference would end. But, at home there was the Internet with a happy end and a document. This century will certainly become the CENTURY OF WOMEN, and in particular a century inspired by the electronic networking like this was done by the team of the women of <http://www.womenaction2000>

### **A Brief Summary from Pat Giles**

As you will have seen from Joke's report we did wave the flag for IAW. The UN building was jam packed most of the time.. over 3,000 NGO women thronged the halls .. and there were a number of valuable sessions designed to keep us happy, busy and informed. For the first time NGOs were in close proximity to the UN meeting and, because of this, probably had more influence than ever before.

**From the EC**

*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. We also have to inform you that we often cannot reach some members from South Africa, Madagascar and Sri Lanka. Please, if it concerns you, write to Pat Richardson at [patgum@nvi.net.au](mailto:patgum@nvi.net.au)*

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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