

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN  
ALLIANCE INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES

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

Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities  
Droits Égaux - Responsabilités Égales

IAW NEWSLETTER March 2009, no. 3



Equal Rights

*Dear members,*

*At the Commission on the Status of Women this year IAW's presence was strong! We are proud and happy with the broadcast of the IAW side-event on 'Climate Change Negotiations'. You will find a copy on [www.womenalliance.org/Weblog](http://www.womenalliance.org/Weblog)  
The IAW letter, on the Taliban regime which destroyed girl's schools and now is allowed to introduce Sharia law in the Swat district of Pakistan, got a lot of support from NGOs. More on CSW in the next newsletter.*

*Good news about more funding for UNDP and UNIFEM, and we are to have a UN Ambassador for Global Women's Issues! But we are a bit worried about the funding of a new UN Women's Entity. As you can see, IAW is preparing for the three-yearly International Meeting in Switzerland - the program looks very interesting.*

**International Alliance of Women  
INTERNATIONAL MEETING JUNE 11 – 19/20 2009  
SWITZERLAND**

**To all Individual Members of the IAW**

*Dear individual members,*

The International Meeting of the International Alliance of Women is scheduled to take place in the small town of Heiden in a beautiful area of Switzerland. Our hostess Jessika Kehl-Lauff and her team of members of the adf/svf, an affiliate of the IAW, are extremely busy planning what promises to be a very interesting programme. Not only are we going to discuss the usual IAW-business, **but** we will take the first steps towards a revised action programme, we will hear what the plans are for Congress in South Africa in 2010, and last but not least, our hostesses will take us on a “tour de Suisse féministe”. This tour will take us to Berne, Lucerne and finally Geneva. On the way we shall meet the president of the Swiss Parliament, be introduced to the national machinery for gender equality in Switzerland, and finally have a workshop in collaboration with WHO.

*Why would individual members wish to come to the International Meeting?*

The International Meeting is a meeting where the board of the IAW and its membership meet for consultations. The membership consists of both organizations and of individual members. At the International Meeting we naturally hope that many presidents/**heads** of member organizations will come. However, individual members are more than welcome. We know that there is commitment, energy, expertise, experience etc. among our individual members.

*And – as an individual member you have the opportunity of being directly involved in and thus having direct influence on the work of the Alliance.*

There is more information to be found on our website [www.womenalliance.org](http://www.womenalliance.org)

If you are interested and perhaps will consider going to Switzerland, please contact IAW Secretary General Lene Pind – and she will send you the relevant documents.

Lene Pind [iawsec@womenalliance.org](mailto:iawsec@womenalliance.org)  
phone +45 6596 0868

## COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

### What the fuss is all about

*It's about women's everyday lives and the fact that across the world women are still earning less than men, are primary care givers for children, people living with HIV and AIDS, the sick, the elderly; are forced to work in the informal labour markets; are under-represented at decision making tables; subjected to violence, and the list goes on and on. Of course, these issues vary between developed and developing countries. But not in nature, only in degree.*

If there is such a thing as 'choreographed chaos', it's been happening here at the [CSW](#) for the past two weeks in the Vienna café in the UN. Hundreds of women have passed through each day and sat amongst the empty coffee cups and overflowing ashtrays as they have met with representatives - from the Permanent Missions, the official delegations to the CSW, the Special Rapporteurs, employees from the four UN gender agencies - Unifem, UNDAW, OSAGI and INSTRAW - and many of the 253 NGOs here.

At the same time they have composed statements, reports, position papers and resolutions, or at least found out how to, and what exactly each one is, how and when they have to be submitted, and in how many copies (eleven copies in advance for an application to speak for three minutes).

And all this has happened in between attending the formal sessions, the caucuses, the forums and the parallel events....

### **Two completely isolated dialogues ?**

Across the road in Church Center the parallel sessions have continued on various floors.

Sussan Tahmasebi is one of the women behind the [One Million Signatures Campaign](#) in Iran. Still in the process of appealing against a two year suspended sentence for organising a protest, and barred from travelling for the past two years, she has just had the ban lifted. She made it to CSW in order to present a more positive image of Iran than the one she feels is reported by the world's media.

### **Elahe keeps coming ...**

Elahe Amani of [Women's Intercultural Network](#) ran a session on Women and Leadership. "Women from the grassroots come here through the NGOs to address the issues and provide knowledge for the official delegations.

But I've been coming for three years and I've never seen an official delegate attend a session, so you have two completely isolated dialogues, across the road from each other".

But Elahe keeps coming to the CSW because "it provides a space for women's NGOs to come together and network; it's valuable because each year we share resources with each other, so if I prepare a document on violence against women I send it to people I know from the CSW in South Africa, China, India".

### **Confidence, culture, child care - and cash**

Each woman has a specific reason to be here, yet all share the common goal of trying to create a common understanding and build the movement promoting women's human rights. At one session this year it was declared that the four things women need in order to participate fully in politics are: confidence, culture, child care - and cash.

*Most of the women I've met here have some of these things, but I haven't met a single woman who has cash. Not one. And neither do the UN agencies dealing with gender. **Unifem has one fortieth** of the money that UNICEF has, which is why the key battle to reform the gender architecture of the UN continues year after year....*

*Recent research by Unifem indicates that if we continue to make progress towards gender equality at the current rate, women will not have equal political participation until 2045.*

Every one of the hundreds and hundreds of women who are here at the CSW is trying to build a 'common understanding', by accurately describing the daily lived reality in their country or region. For some, it's a matter of just one word that makes all the difference to this task they have set themselves.

*More on:* [http://www.opendemocracy.net/author/Jane\\_Gabriel.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/author/Jane_Gabriel.jsp) *By Jane Gabriel.*

### **CSW 53 - Experiences and comments from an individual IAW member**

*One week in New York and you feel angry, sad, exhilarated, befriended, hopeless and finally relieved.*

*Almost 2000 members of close to 350 NGOs attended the 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women, until hours after the interpreters left, not sure there would be any Agreed Conclusions this year.*

### **CSW - the final days**

Delegates negotiated till 6 in the morning on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March, unable to reach agreement. Then the Armenian vice-chair of the Bureau came up with compromise texts.

The final session was to start at 3pm on the 13<sup>th</sup>. All that happened was the passing of some resolutions, then an adjournment till 5, a take it or leave it situation, more consulting, finally toward 6 Egypt and the African Countries declared they could not live with the results, Iran was sure it could not at all.

Meanwhile the translators left and co-operative delegations spoke as lengthily as they could to say how flexible they had been and how they would accept the compromise package, be it reluctantly. The gallery applauded, while in a corner delegates were huddled, gesticulating, talking heatedly as in a play.

Finally the vice-chair announced that unfortunately there had been a few mistakes in the text that he now would correct. Egypt and Africa accepted and finally Iran did as well.

So now we have Agreed Conclusions, without words like reproductive rights, but health and services got in, and it mentions CEDAW as a legal recourse, once all national means failed.

*IAW also drafted a letter to the Government of Pakistan and the Secretary General of the UN, accepted and signed by many NGOs attending CSW. It speaks of our shock that Taliban destroyed girls' schools and that now the Taliban in the district of Swat is allowed to introduce Sharia law. Their interpretation of Sharia includes the idea that girls' education is unIslamic.*

*We can't believe that the government of Pakistan would trade women's rights, like the right to education, for an armistice in the North. Fortunately there is a quite recent book about founding girls' schools in the North of Pakistan that gainsays the Taliban's assumptions.*

Time honoured practices of our affiliates and associates: demanding women's inclusion in decision-making, supporting quotas, promoting elections mechanisms that advance women's representation and encouraging votes for women prove successful.

It is wonderful to see how with the support of governments, the involvement of NGOs and aid from international institutions, IAW's goals of women's participation are being reached in formerly disrupted societies, like Rwanda.

*By IAW Vice-President Lyda Verstegen*

### **The Agreed Conclusions and Language**

Caroline Lambert from Australia is here with [Asia Pacific Women's Watch](#). She too, is working on the issue of language and negotiating word by word as the CSW moves to finalise the Agreed Conclusion for 2009.

Caroline says, "This is the only global platform that links international policy to the grassroots work that I do. My particular specialisation is language, so I work hard in the second week of CSW trying to get key words into the language of the Agreed Conclusions, because the language impacts strongly on women across the world.

In the Asia Pacific region where I come from, the conservative position for the past five years has meant that the language has been one of maintaining rather than advancing women's rights.

For example there's been a lot of advocacy work by women on reproductive and sexual rights, and in countries where women are dying every minute because they are not getting the services they need, we are trying to get the states to provide the services".

### **Language can be crucial**

*"There was a push by one nation state to change 'services' to 'care' which implies the government should provide, rather than have reproductive and sexual rights as a right. So*

*often the language is moved from a rights based position to a more patronising one, in which the government has more control over the issue. So language can be crucial".*

## UNITED NATIONS

### **Violence against Women - definitions by Dr Ertürk**

Each year Dr Ertürk reports on the causes and consequences of violence against women to the United Nations Human Rights Council. This year she is calling for the international community to come up with a new, common definition, of violence against women. You can read her reports in full [here](#) and also on: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/women/rapporteur/index.htm> She mentions the great efforts of Vjosa Dobruna in Kosovo to involve women in the building of new institutions.

### **Resolution 1325 of the Security Council**

We hope she will appreciate *IAW member Anje Wiersinga's* efforts to draft a letter to the government of Kosovo, Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon and the member states of the UN, to the effect that SC resolution 1325 be effectuated especially in Kosovo. It was signed by many organisations.  
*By IAW Vice-President Lyda Versteegen*

### **New U.N. Women's Entity**

A high-level panel of former political leaders and senior government officials released a study in late 2006 on ways to recommend the creation of a specialised agency for women aimed at consolidating gender-related activities under a single umbrella. But more than two years later - and following the conclusion of a two-week session of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) last week - the original proposal seems likely to be abandoned or diluted.

### **Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon is looking at two approaches:**

1. The first is to leave gender architecture as it is now in the hands of four U.N. entities, while adding resources and improving inter-agency cooperation.
2. The second is to unify all four under one roof, with several institutional options for the proposed consolidation. These include a fund or programme similar to the U.N. Children's agency UNICEF or the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP), both of which are considered full-fledged U.N. agencies with governing bodies.
3. Another option is to create a separate department in the U.N. Secretariat (with appropriate funding)
4. The most likely scenario, the Secretary-General said, is the creation of a composite entity, which would combine the features of both a fund and a department.

### **Decision at the General Assembly**

All of these proposals have been submitted to the General Assembly President Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann for consideration by the 192-member Assembly at its current session, which concludes early September. A final decision is expected by then.

*More on:* <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=46186>

## GLOBAL NEWS

### **U.S. support for Women**

#### **Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues**

President Obama announced his intent to nominate Melanne Verveer, Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues.

Melanne Verveer is Co-Founder, Chair and Co-CEO of Vital Voices Global Partnership, an international nonprofit organisation that invests in emerging women leaders – pioneers of economic, political and social progress in their countries.

Prior to founding Vital Voices, Verveer served as Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff to the First Lady in the Clinton Administration and was chief assistant to then First Lady Hillary Clinton in her international activities.

#### **A model for governments**

Verveer also took the lead in establishing the President's Interagency Council on Women, which serves as a model for governments to address issues of concern to women.

Previously, Verveer served as Executive Vice President of People for the American Way, a civil rights and constitutional liberties organization where she played a key role in the passage of several

landmark civil rights bills.

She was Coordinator for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs for the U.S. Catholic Conference, Field Manager of Common Cause and worked in the U.S. House and Senate as Legislative Director and Special Assistant respectively.

Verveer is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, Women's Foreign Policy Group, the Washington Institute on Foreign Affairs and Women In International Security.

#### **An unprecedented decision**

The President's decision to nominate an Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues is unprecedented and reflects the elevated importance of global women's issues to the President and his entire Administration.

More on:

[http://www.google.nl/search?hl=nl&q=President+Obama+Announces+Key+State+Department+Appointments&btnG=Google+zoeken&meta=lr%3Dlang\\_en](http://www.google.nl/search?hl=nl&q=President+Obama+Announces+Key+State+Department+Appointments&btnG=Google+zoeken&meta=lr%3Dlang_en)

*Sent to us by IAW President Rosy Weiss*

#### **Funding for UNFPA**

President Obama signed legislation containing a \$50 million contribution to UNFPA. This puts in motion the restoration of U.S. funding for UNFPA, which had been suspended since 2002.

"This is a much needed support," said Ms Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, "which will allow UNFPA to maintain its life-saving work, particularly improving maternal and reproductive health, in the world's poorest communities, especially during this financial crisis."

*A U.S. contribution would support ongoing UNFPA initiatives around the world, such as training midwives to make deliveries safer; providing health supplies to clinics; supporting the treatment of obstetric fistula; meeting the special needs of women in crises; and preventing HIV among young people.*

The President's action fulfills a pledge he made during his first days in office: "By resuming funding to UNFPA, the U.S. will be joining 180 other donor nations working collaboratively to reduce poverty, improve the health of women and children, prevent HIV/AIDS and provide family planning assistance to women in 154 countries."

More on: <http://www.unfpa.org/public/News/pid/2180>

#### **Australia increases support to UNIFEM**

The Government of Australia announced on 8 March a significant increase in its contribution to UNIFEM, as part of its international commitment to advancing greater equality between men and women.

This commitment to UNIFEM core funds over the next four years amounts to more than US\$17 million. The funding will support UNIFEM's work in over 100 countries to reduce women's poverty and exclusion, end violence against women, reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls, and strengthen women's leadership in governance and post-conflict reconstruction.

In a press release issued by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stephen Smith, and Minister for the Status of Women, Tanya Plibersek, the Australian Government stresses its dedication to advancing gender equality and empowering women worldwide.

"Australia is committed to playing an active role in advancing women's rights and our work with UNIFEM to support development that benefits both men and women will make a major contribution to this.", she said.

On: [http://www.unifem.org/news\\_events/story\\_detail.php?StoryID=849](http://www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=849)

#### **Indian Growth Soars yet Child Hunger Persists**

NEW DELHI — Small, sick, listless children have long been India's scourge — "a national shame," in the words of its Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. But even after a decade of galloping economic growth, child malnutrition rates are worse here than in many sub-Saharan African countries, and they stand out as a paradox in a proud democracy.

China, that other economic powerhouse, sharply reduced child malnutrition, and now just 7 percent of its children under 5 are underweight, a critical gauge of malnutrition. In India, by contrast, despite robust growth and good government intentions, the comparable number is 42.5 percent. Malnutrition makes children more prone to illness and stunts physical and intellectual growth for a lifetime.

#### **There are no simple explanations**

Economists and public health experts say stubborn malnutrition rates point to a central failing in this democracy of the poor. Yet several democracies have all but eradicated hunger. Ignoring the needs of the poor altogether does spell political peril in India, helping to topple parties in the last elections. Others point to the efficiency of an authoritarian state like China. India's sluggish and sometimes corrupt bureaucracy has only haltingly put in place relatively simple solutions — iodizing salt, for instance, or making sure all children are immunized against preventable diseases — to say nothing of its progress on the harder tasks, like changing what and how parents feed their children.

#### **230 million hungry people**

A World Food Program report last month noted that India remained home to more than a fourth of the world's hungry, 230 million people in all. It also found anaemia to be on the rise among rural women of childbearing age in eight states across India. Indian women are often the last to eat in their homes and often unlikely to eat well or rest during pregnancy. While India runs the largest child feeding program in the world, experts agree it is inadequately designed, and has made barely a dent in the ranks of sick children in the past 10 years.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/13/world/asia/13malnutrition.html?\\_r=1&th&emc=th](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/13/world/asia/13malnutrition.html?_r=1&th&emc=th)

*Sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu*

### **PUBLICATIONS - EVENTS - WEBSITES**

A new program at the **Patricia Giles Centre** in Perth to encourage grandparents and older carers to become involved in the care of young children is being supported by the Australian Government. The Young Mums and Grandies Group expands the successful Kurlungas Playgroup for Mums (Carers) and Bubs, in the suburbs of Girrawheen and Balga.

The Government would provide \$15,600 in funding to the end of June

On: [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/grandies\\_playgroup\\_feb18.htm](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/grandies_playgroup_feb18.htm)

#### **Publication: Peace Lessons from Around the World on:**

<http://www.haguepeace.org/index.php?action=resources>

#### **Women Waging Peace - Women in Kosovo**

The Network 'Women Waging Peace' is part of the Institute for Inclusive Security. Their website on [www.InclusiveSecurity.org](http://www.InclusiveSecurity.org) and on:

[http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/82\\_women\\_waging\\_peace\\_network.cfm](http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/82_women_waging_peace_network.cfm)

#### **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.

IAW Newsletter / News Flash :	Joke Sebus	<iaw.newsletter@inter.nl.net>
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