

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 2012, no. 3



Equal Rights

Dear members,

*At first NGOs at CSW were full of hope. A very energetic speech of Soon-Young Yoon, as Vice Chair of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women/NY, started the Conference. She invited all representatives to more than 300 parallel events, on issues ranging from trafficking of girls and women, to the family, ageing, migration, intergenerational dialogue, health, and sustainable development.*

*At the end, women were let down. Women were left with an unreadable word puzzle and unfinished draft document, after a lot of bickering by politicians on language that had already been accepted at former UN Conferences. See also the statement of IAW President Lyda Versteegen.*

*On the other hand, most of the CSW resolutions were accepted. The IAW side events went very well. Compliments for all IAW reps who organised and attended those events!*

*In this newsletter an announcement of a possible 5th World Conference on Women. I already heard tweets like: 'Fine, but without politicians'. For IAW, with its history of lobbying for more women in leading political positions, this idea gives room for thought.*

*The Human Rights Council is in full swing with interesting items. There is news on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In Bangalore, India, there are figures on the differences between women and male teachers and an answer to 'why'? Women as Agents of Change in the Arab Spring are still in the news. Links to conferences, interesting websites etc. are as usual at the end.*

### CSW56 - STATEMENTS by Norway, Michelle Bachelet and the EU

#### CSW56: Norway's statement on the final day

*3/15/2012 // As negotiations at the 56th session of the Commission on the Status of Women ended, Norway's UN Ambassador Morten Wetland delivered a strong statement in defence of gender equality and women's rights.*

***Ambassador Wetland warned against the use of religious, cultural and certain so-called moral arguments to block decisions and avoid obligations that would save hundreds of thousands of lives every year.***

"Madame Chair, fellow delegates,

The term - "Moral Hazard" – is often used when someone takes a risky decision - because they know that someone else will pay if the decision is wrong. At this year's meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women I am sad to say, this is precisely what we have witnessed.

In statements and in speeches - and in negotiations - we have seen how moral values have been evoked, to deprive women of their Human Rights, their opportunities and ultimately - for some - their life! This is the real Moral Hazard of our time!

Fellow delegates,

Norway fully respects and protects religious freedom and cultural diversity. But we cannot accept that religious, cultural and certain so-called moral arguments are being used to block decisions and avoid obligations we all know would give millions of women freedom and save hundreds of thousands of lives every year. All countries and cultures have their traditions and hold them dear.

But in 2012, with the knowledge we now have with regard to women's rights, opportunities and health, we also know that certain perspectives and practices are harmful – and dangerous – to women. This means we have to compromise.

Many will have to let go of some traditional convictions, also when they are based on religious belief or culture. After all, every country, every culture and every society undergo permanent change. That's what's called – development.

Norway will therefore continue to insist that the United Nations, including the Commission on the Status of Women, should take rational decisions for a better world for all – including all women. Thank you Madame Chair."

#### **Michelle Bachelet: “deeply regrettable”**

March 16 2012 - UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet comments on the ending of the 56th session of the Commission on the Status of Women without agreed conclusions. "During this 56th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, we have witnessed passionate and dynamic discussion with a very high level of participation from governments and civil society.

Unfortunately we have also witnessed an inability to reach consensus on the agreed conclusions on our priority theme, empowering rural women. We have come to an impasse, which is deeply regrettable.” More on:

<http://www.unwomen.org/2012/03/impasse-at-commission-on-status-of-women-deeply-regrettable/>

#### **From the EU statement on the final day**

We emphasise that the prolongation of the negotiations on this text beyond the scheduled CSW session cannot be considered a precedent.

Negotiations on agreed conclusions should be concluded while the session is still ongoing, allowing for the participation and input from the delegates from the capitals, one the main assets of the Commission.

Extending the meeting time also raises the question about the efficient use of the UN resources, important for all Member States.

#### **Bottlenecks**

\* *Gender equality* perspective was not accepted; it was not possible to put ‘equality’ after ‘gender’.

\* *Sexual and reproductive rights* and its placement (it should come under violence as was in BPfA para 118). Many said no.

So this was one main controversial issue and *it was not possible to even agree on the agreed language of previous CSW conclusions or BFfA or CEDAW*, although we voiced references with paragraph numbers throughout the discussions.

\* *Family planning and contraceptive methods* - another very controversial concept.

\* *Women of all ages* was also very problematic. Some understandings were that this would apply to girls and to their sexual rights which was not acceptable to some countries - although again it was agreed language from previous CSWs.

See for other comments: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/wom1905.doc.htm>

### **INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN**

#### **CSW56 - Statement of IAW President Lyda Versteegen**

The 56th Commission on the Status of Women was closed without agreed conclusions after an extra week of negotiating. The stumbling blocks were **gender equality** and **reproductive rights**.

The subject of this 56<sup>th</sup> session of CSW was the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges. What you expect then are agreed conclusions about access - infrastructure, schools, hospitals, seeds and plants, land rights, etc. And a lot more that rural women need. But primarily what they need is good health to perform all their tasks, including being able to decide about the number and spacing of their children, and protection against harmful practices like early marriage, and other violence performed by men who have prejudices about women’s worth and capacities.

That’s what gender means: social and cultural constructs about the role of women and men, often based on prejudice.

It was so simple, and the first draft of the agreed conclusions said just that.

But then the five pages of draft agreed conclusions became twenty four, some countries wanting to add something and some to strike something. The disagreement was – I was able to read afterwards in the statement of the Norwegian delegate - about ‘moral hazards’. You wonder what moral hazards there can be in ‘access’ as described above.

The moral values that have been invoked deprive women of their human rights as laid down in CEDAW (the Convention to Eradicate all Discrimination Against Women). And for what? Religious freedom and cultural practices. What religion would think it wrong if men and women, boys and girls are taught to respect one another? Absence of this simple lesson is life threatening!

Women’s rights are human rights. Human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated.

The IAW affirms that full and equal enjoyment of human rights - as laid down in treaties, conventions and declarations - is due to all women and girls.

The IAW maintains that a prerequisite to securing these rights is the universal ratification and implementation without reservation of CEDAW. The importance and value of women’s contribution as equal partners has been acknowledged at the numerous United Nations world conferences held from 1975 through to the present time. Of particular relevance for women is the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, as reconfirmed in 2000, 2005, and 2010, to which 189 member states have committed themselves.

**The IAW is committed to uphold these documents! The IAW counts on all governments to do the same.**

Lyda Verstegen, [iawpres@womenalliance.org](mailto:iawpres@womenalliance.org)

*Note: This statement will be put in English and French on the IAW website [www.womenalliance.org](http://www.womenalliance.org)*

### **CSW56 - by IAW Secretary General Lene Pind**

Soon-Young Yoon and the others of the NGO/CSW Committee deserve a lot of praise for having organised the NGO Consultation Day. The programme was inspiring and interesting.

Among the participants were IAW members Daniela Reiter, Jocelyne Scutt, Susanne Riveles, Asha Deshpande, Mmabatho Ramagoshi, Bina Jain, Anje Wiersinga, Marion Boeker and myself.

As chair of the committee, Soon-Young opened the meeting with a very energetic speech. It is really good to see our head of delegation at the UN in New York in such an important position. In this way we continue our tradition of having representatives in influential places. Kay Fraleigh was chair of the Committee 1982 - 1991.

*This is the first of several short reports from New York that Secretary General Lene Pind wrote on Ning, IAW's own Social Network.*

### **International Women's Day in New York**

Pictures from the March on International Women's Day organised by NGO/CSW, are to be found on: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/22969723@N02/6819070462/in/set-72157629542348949> The

Celebration March down 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue-- to declare “Global Women for Equality, Development and Peace” with a smiling Soon-Young walking behind a big banner was a wonderful opening.

### **IAW International Meeting in Melbourne, Australia - October 8 - 12 2012**

Lene Pind has invited you to come to the 'IAW International Meeting October 8 - 12 2012' hosted by Women’s Electoral Lobby, League of Women Voters Victoria and Union of Australian Women Victoria. We are busy planning the International Meeting to be held in Melbourne at the Queen Victoria Women's Centre. It would be interesting to see how many of you are planning to come. in the Women's Centre.

The International Meeting is a meeting between presidents of IAW member organisations and the IAW Board. The purpose of the meeting is to exchange information, to discuss current issues that are important to women, and to set goals for the future work for the Alliance. Finally we shall decide on the theme for Congress in 2013.

*Secretary General Lene Pind on: IAW 's own Social Network, Ning. Only IAW members will be accepted to this social network. On:*

[http://iawomen.ning.com/events/event/show?id=4015520%3AEvent%3A18808&xgi=3EBMx7pimusyhM&xg\\_source=msg\\_invite\\_event](http://iawomen.ning.com/events/event/show?id=4015520%3AEvent%3A18808&xgi=3EBMx7pimusyhM&xg_source=msg_invite_event)

## ALL AROUND THE WORLD

### **A fifth World Conference for Women?**

A proposal to hold a 5th Women's World Conference in 2015 will be put forward to the General Assembly of the UN on behalf of Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-moon and on behalf of President of the General Assembly, Mr Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser. At the last NGO Briefing Ms. Ana Marie Hernando (Philippines), Vice-Chair of the Bureau of CSW 56, confirmed that the chief of the Secretary General's Cabinet yesterday indeed made an intervention under Agenda item 5 of the CSW. There is still the 'funding' to be found.

### **19th session of the Human Rights Council opens in Geneva**

On 27 February 2012, the Human Rights Council (HRC) opened its 19th session in Geneva. During the 19th session, Member States will discuss more than [80 reports](#), including those prepared by independent human rights experts appointed by the Council. These reports address an exhaustive list of human rights issues, including the right to development, adequate housing, and food, as well as social and cultural rights, children's rights, the situation of human rights defenders, and the issue of juvenile justice.

#### **Countries high on the agenda of the HRC**

The human rights situation in several countries, such as Iran, Myanmar, Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and Syria, will also figure high on the Council's agenda. Moreover, the Council will feature eight additional [high-level panel discussions](#) that will look at issues such as human rights mainstreaming within international cooperation and in UN activities; the freedom of expression on the Internet; discriminatory practices in connection with sexual orientation and gender identity; the rights of various groups in society, such as children, persons with disabilities, minorities, and people living with HIV/AIDS.

#### **Human Rights Issues**

Below follows information on various human rights issues that will be addressed at the 19th session of the Council. These include:

- [The Right to Development](#)
- [Human Rights and Children](#)
- [Human Rights and HIV/AIDS](#)
- [Human Rights and Minorities](#)
- [Human Rights and Internally Displaced People](#)
- [Human Rights and the Right to Food](#)
- [Human Rights and the Right to Adequate Housing](#)
- [Torture and Arbitrary Retention](#)
- [The Freedom of Religion or Belief](#)

The session will conclude with the adoption of resolutions and decisions that consequently will need to be implemented. To see the full programme of the 19th session, click [here](#).

In parallel to the 19th session, many NGOs are organizing side-events. For an overview of events organized, click [here](#). Also on: <http://www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?article3777>

*LAW representative at the Human Rights Council: H el ene Sackstein*

### **Signing Ceremony of the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The signing ceremony of the [Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\) on a communications procedure](#) took place on 28 February 2012 in Geneva, Switzerland, thanks to the initiative of the Permanent Mission of Slovakia.

This Protocol, which is the third of its kind to the [CRC](#), is not only a new juridical instrument that will strengthen and broaden the implementation, recognition and representation of the rights of the child, but it also constitutes a new right for children that is complementary to their previously recognized rights by the United Nations.

It will provide individual children the opportunity to directly submit complaints on the violation of their rights to the [Committee on the Rights of the Child](#) when national or regional mechanisms for such complaints are not in place or inefficient. As such, the Protocol will strengthen and complement national and regional mechanisms in allowing children to individually report on violations of their rights.

The 20 countries that [signed](#) the Protocol during the ceremony are Slovakia, Slovenia, Costa Rica, Portugal, Serbia, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Germany, Morocco, Montenegro, Spain, Austria, Belgium, Finland, Italy, Luxembourg, Mali, Peru and the Maldives.

Other countries that would like to sign the Protocol can do so at UN headquarters in New York. By signing the Protocol, the above-mentioned countries have indicated that they have the intention to take steps to express their consent to be bound by the Protocol at a later date.

In other words, they have not yet ratified, accessed, or accepted the Protocol, which would imply legal obligations. The Protocol will only enter into force three months after ten UN Member States have ratified or accessed it.

More on: <http://www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?article3779>

### **The Arab Spring - Women as Agents of Change - Council of Europe**

*IAW is one of the 400 INGOs (International NGOs) at the Council of Europe and Anje Wiersinga is one of the IAW representatives at the Conference of INGOs.*

Anje writes: "In January 2012 the IAW Representatives (INGOs) in the Council of Europe introduced a Resolution and a Recommendation on: 'Gender equality perspectives in political and democratic processes in the MENA Region (Middle East and North Africa)'.

Both were discussed in the Committee on Democracy and adopted by the INGO Conference.

#### **A Hearing in April on Women as Agents of Change**

The Council of Europe has a North South Centre, which has been cooperating for many years with the North African Countries, countries which can participate and even become members of some commissions of the Council of Europe.

In October 2011 I attended a meeting of the North South Centre on 'Women as agents of change in the South Mediterranean Region'.

Since June 2011 IAW representatives promoted and supported the idea of a Hearing by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, for women of North African Countries on Women as Agents of Change. This will now take place in April. We will be consulted in advance".

*Website of the Council of Europe on:* <http://www.coe.int/>

*Website of the Conference of INGOs on :* [http://www.coe.int/T/NGO/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/T/NGO/default_en.asp)

*Regional IAW Vice President Arab Countries and Representative to the Arab League, Horeya Megahed*

### **More Ma'ams than Sirs in schools**

In Bangalore, India, [women](#) hold up half the sky, it is said. They certainly prop up more than half of the state's schools. Data compiled by the education department has revealed that women school teachers outnumber their male counterparts by 20%.

As per records for current academic year 2011-12, the total number of teachers in schools of all types is 430,072. Of this, 234,719 are women and [the rest](#) -- 195,353 -- are men; the difference is 39,366.

There is also a definite pattern in recruitment of male and female school teachers across the state. Men are in the majority in high schools and government schools, while women run the show in unaided ones.

#### **The break up**

In lower primary schools, the number of female teachers is marginally more than that of men. But government schools have 6,000 more male teachers. Women compensate for this in unaided schools, where their number is four times that of men.

Women have a clear lead in upper primary schools: 60,323 as against 19,753 male teachers in unaided schools. Put together, the total number of female and male teachers in elementary schools, comprising lower and upper primary schools, is 173,256 and 127,586 respectively.

#### **The male bastion**

The only section where there is a twist in the tale is in high schools. Male teachers outnumber women in almost every section except in unaided schools. Even in the latter, the disparity is not high like in other sections. There are 22,463 male teachers in government schools, 21,585 in aided schools and 20,332 in unaided schools. The corresponding numbers for women are 14,876, 6,846 and 37,547.

The trend remains the same across regions, despite the range of development.

### **Women teachers at madrasas**

Interestingly, the number of women teachers in madrasas is almost the same as men when all sections are put together.

[Banjara Academy](#); chairman [Ali Khwaja](#) reasons that low salaries dissuade men from taking up teaching, while women prefer the job because of its other advantages.

"Less working hours, absence of targets, secure environs and periodic holidays are the advantages that draw women to this profession. Even many highly qualified ones prefer teaching to more lucrative alternatives," he says.

[Sruthy Susan Ullas](#). More on: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bangalore/More-maams-than-sirs-in-schools/articleshow/12270230.cms>

*Mailed to us by IAW member Anjana Basu*

### **EVENTS - CONFERENCES - LINKS - WEBCASTS**

#### **Lilly Be'Soer – Voice for Change**

Lilly Be'Soer Kolts is the founder of the women's human rights NGO, Voice for Change, in Papua New Guinea. In 2010, she was awarded a Pacific Human Rights Defenders Award.

This year, she successfully coordinated a peace reconciliation to resettle 500 internally displaced families and is also facilitating a drug surrender programme for youth in her local district.

On: <http://www.unwomen.org/news-events/>

**Women in Politics** - New Map on: [http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/wmmmap12\\_en.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/wmmmap12_en.pdf)

**IANSA** - Summaries from sessions and side events are available at the 2012 Review Conference on the UN Programme of Action on small arms (PoA), 19-23 March 2012. On:

<http://iansa.org/news/2012/03/2012-preparatory-committee-for-the-second-un-programme-of-action-review-conference>

#### [Global Women's Survey](#)

March 13 2012 - UN Women and the Rockefeller Foundation are supporting the Women's Major Group to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development by conducting a global survey on sustainable development and Rio+20. The survey will gather the views, perspectives and goals of advocates around the world on the issue of gender equality and women's empowerment.

To complete the survey, go to: [www.surveymonkey.com/s/Rio20\\_Gender](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Rio20_Gender)

#### **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](mailto:iaw.newsletter@inter.nl.net)>  
International Women's News : Priscilla Todd (English) <[iaw.iwnews@womenallince.org](mailto:iaw.iwnews@womenallince.org)>  
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