

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

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

**IAW NEWSLETTER - May 1999**



Dear IAW members,

*As promised, this Newsletter will bring you news about 1999 as the Year of Older Persons. We're looking back at the agenda of ESCAP in Bangkok in April and with Health we're looking forward to Beijing +5 in 2000. There is the Questionnaire, sent to governments in preparation for Beijing +5. Ministers of the European Union talked in April about important social issues for women on one hand yet on the other hand there is this cruel 'ethnic cleansing' and bombing in former Yugoslavia, with many women and children among the victims. In Pakistan women's organisations are protesting against the lax attitude of their government in crimes of so-called honour-killings and in between all this news, the good and the bad, the Alliance is preparing for its 31<sup>st</sup> Triennial Congress to be held in New York.*

**IAW 31<sup>st</sup> CONGRESS August 30 - September 3 and SEMINAR August 28 1999**

**United Nations Church Centre, 777 UN Plaza (First Avenue) New York**

Attached : Registration Form to be sent to the Congress Secretariat and Form to be returned to the Secretary, Hotels and Congress Programme (outline only) plus Information for Delegates. These forms will be enclosed in the next issue of the IWN.

**Board Members** please note that there will be a pre-Congress meeting of the Board at 3 pm on Sunday, August 29. Also, those of you who are standing for election or re-election, please note that the newly elected Board will meet at 9.30 am on Saturday, September 4.

The URL of the website of the New York Helmsley Hotel, 212 East 42nd Street, New York NY 10017 is to be found on **HYPERLINK** [http://lodging.yahoo.com/lodging/New\\_York/Cities/New\\_York/hotel/996811.html](http://lodging.yahoo.com/lodging/New_York/Cities/New_York/hotel/996811.html) Make sure to look for the NEW YORK Helmsley Hotel, because there are other Helmsley hotels as well. On the site you can find a small map. Have a look at the place of the venue in the United Nations Plaza. In the triangle of the Helmsley and the UN Plaza you'll find the Vanderbilt YMCA, YMCA, 224 East 47th St. New York, NY 10017 on **HYPERLINK** <http://www.vmcanyc.org/reservations/index.html>

**World Summit of Copenhagen**

In the April Newsletter we asked if there were any IAW members who were interested in a discussion group on Social Development, based on the Social Summit of Copenhagen and to be continued at Congress. Well, we are sorry to tell you that nobody stepped forward up to now! Maybe the following information will rouse some enthusiasm.

At the conclusion of the World Summit for Social Development - held 6-12 March 1995 in Copenhagen, Denmark - Governments adopted a Declaration and Programme of Action which represent a new consensus on the need to put people at the centre of development. The largest gathering yet of world leaders - 117 heads of State or Government - pledged to make the conquest of poverty, the goal of full employment and the fostering of stable, safe and just societies their overriding objectives. A special session of the General Assembly will be held in the year 2000 to examine the overall implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. On **HYPERLINK** <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/wssd.htm>

**Violence against Women, based on the 1993 Declaration.**

This is a Human Rights document, to be found on **HYPERLINK**

<http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/>

IAW Commission Convenor on all Forms on Violence: Rosy Weiss

**HEALTH**

Negotiations during the 43<sup>rd</sup> CSW on Health in March have taken a lot of time. The countries from the European Union started the discussion with a joint resolution but this caused the first bottleneck because it was

not acceptable in all parts by the G77 countries. Much of the debate centred around Article 2C on Sexual and Reproductive Health. At last, after the meeting time of the Committee was extended, 2C was accepted including the following amendment:

Support scientific research into and the development of safe, affordable, effective and easily-accessible female-controlled methods of family planning, including dual methods such as microbicides and female condoms - "that protect against sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS and prevent pregnancy, taking into account § 96 of the report of the Fourth World Conference on Women" -.

2C is followed by 2D:

Support the development and widespread use of male contraceptive methods

and 2E:

Educate women and men, particularly young people, with a view to encouraging men to accept their responsibilities in matters related to sexuality, reproduction and child-rearing and to promoting equal relationships between women and men.

Interesting is 1E:

Design and implement (school) programmes etc.

Also 1I:

Ensure that special attention is given to supporting women with disabilities and empower them to lead independent and healthy lives.

The revised draft of the 43rd CSW with agreed conclusions on Women and Health is to be found on HYPERLINK <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/healthagree.htm>

What will happen next?

Gudrun Haupter has made the following prediction.

'Based on the Beijing Platform of Action, the Cairo Plan of Action and the Agreed Conclusions on Women and Health at the CSW 99, the following old and new issues will receive much attention during the Beijing +5 process:

- Quality and affordable health services including reproductive and sexual health, reduction of high maternal mortality, malnutrition and iron deficiency anemia.
- Enhancement of women's ability, knowledge and empowerment - including young women - to make informed choices to avoid unwanted pregnancies and HIV/AIDS infection.
- Gender-sensitive and age-sensitive mental health services and counseling.
- Prevention programs aimed at reducing tobacco use by women and girls.
- Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the curricula and training of all health care and service providers.
- Inclusion of women into clinical trials of pharmaceuticals where appropriate, and analysis of the resulting data for sex and gender differences.'

With thanks to IAW Commission Convenor for Health: Gudrun Haupter.

### **1999 The International Year of Older Persons**

The United Nations designated 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. The theme - *Towards a Society for All Ages* - emphasises greater integration between the young and the old today, building stronger understanding for tomorrow. The UN programme of events will centre upon four main areas:

1. The situation of older people
2. Life-long individual development
3. Multigenerational relationships
4. The relationship between population, ageing and development.

### *Age, Gender and Poverty*

Age and gender inequalities are linked with poverty. Many studies have discussed the gender nature of poverty and the relationship between the two on a global scale. Other research on poverty and ageing has generally probed into the globalisation of poverty in late life and recommended policies to eradicate the problem. There is, however, little systematic incorporation of gender into multifaceted studies of poverty and ageing. Among the elderly world wide, poverty appears in the form of social and economic insecurity, health hazards, loneliness, illiteracy and dependency.

Poverty among older women is not accidental. It is multi-dimensional in that it stems from the multi-layered inequalities that women experience during their lifetime because of their gender, class, race, ethnicity and marital status. Included in this group are older immigrants or refugee women who are poor and isolated. Throughout the world, older women are more likely to live in poverty than men and this group is increasing rapidly. On HYPERLINK <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/aging.htm>

## ESCAP

In our January Newsletter we mentioned the 55th session of the UN ESCAP, April 22-28 in Bangkok. There was one particular social item on the agenda: Socio-economic measures to alleviate poverty in rural and urban areas. The Commission endorsed the Macau Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific, and urged all governments to pay attention to older persons in severe poverty and enable them to have access to basic health services. It called upon members and associate members to set up and strengthen national mechanisms on ageing, and to enable them to co-ordinate the observance of the International Year of Older Persons during 1999. On HYPERLINK <http://www.unescap.org/unis/unap31/unap3-1a.htm>

## Bringing Equality Home

In our November Newsletter we mentioned the Questionnaire, designed to obtain information on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, to prepare for the UN Special Session: "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century", to be held in June 2000. The due date for replies was 30 April, 1999. We urged IAW Affiliates to be informed of the Questionnaire of their country. As of 28 April, DAW has received replies from four countries.

It could be well worth knowing what your government is reporting. In a new publication of UNIFEM, called *Bringing Equality Home*, there are some interesting examples of women's organisations, challenging the reports of their government. UNIFEM has intensified its CEDAW-related programming for the 20th Anniversary of the Convention. The publication (available in English, French and Spanish), offers innovative examples of using the Convention at the national level. UNIFEM and IRAW Asia Pacific are co-sponsoring the CEDAW-in-Action with a Virtual Working Group, a space to share experiences and knowledge on implementing CEDAW. Here is an example.

## Zimbabwe

The Government of Zimbabwe presented its first report to the CEDAW Committee in January 1998. The report painted a glowing portrait of the state of women's human rights in Zimbabwe, and its centrepiece was the 1982 Legal Age of Majority Act (LAMA). This Act is very important to women in Zimbabwe. It places men and women on an equal legal footing, giving both full legal capacity at the age of 18. Because of LAMA women can: enter into any contract, including a marriage contract; acquire and dispose of property; open bank accounts; own businesses; be guardians of their children even if separated or widowed; apply for passports on their own; and access credit facilities. Also, it is LAMA that gave Zimbabwean women the right to vote.

Just two weeks after presenting its CEDAW report, the Government brought LAMA to parliament for review and revision and a move developed to have it completely repealed. The women's NGOs in Zimbabwe were outraged. A group of women's NGOs, including the Women's Action Group (WAG), had gone to the United Nations in New York and conveyed a shadow report to the CEDAW Committee. They had listened while the Government used LAMA to congratulate itself on its women's human rights record before the CEDAW Committee. Women's NGOs immediately began a campaign to defend LAMA, etc. etc.

The publication is to be found on HYPERLINK <http://www.unifem.undp.org/cedaw/indexen.htm>  
Convenor on the CEDAW Convention: Padmini Casinader Christiansen

## EUROPEAN UNION

During the last few weeks several steps were taken for more equality between women and men. We will give you the highlights shortly, with URLs for more information. More equality for women is fine of course, but it is in shrill contrast with women who have been brutally raped and murdered in former Yugoslavia, their houses burned and bombed, their families scattered.

Seminar on equal opportunities in a *family-friendly working world*.

In mid-April in Dusseldorf experts discussed how to promote a system of incentives comparable throughout Europe for a world of work more accommodating to the family and to women. More information on HYPERLINK [http://europa.eu.int/dgo5/equ\\_opp/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/dgo5/equ_opp/index_en.htm)

EU-Ministers signed a declaration on *Women and Men in Power*.

A declaration on women in decision-making was signed by Ministers from 13 EU Member States in a Paris Conference on 17 April. It aims to ensure balanced participation by women and men and recommends that European institutions, governments and political parties take measures both in the electoral field and in the appointment of members of advisory bodies.