

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

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

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

**CSW 2005 NewsFlash - April 2005**



**Equal Rights**

*Dear IAW members,*

*In IWNNews you will find a good summary of the reports of IAW members at CSW. The Alliance was well represented and our members have worked well and hard. This NewsFlash features an interview with two young people at the Youth for Women's Rights Caucus at CSW, with their impressions of all that happened there.*

*You will also find a few URLs of international activities around young people at the end of this newsletter.*

### **THE YOUNG OUTLOOK**

**Another world where rights are respected and cherished is possible.  
We are determined to struggle for this world.**

#### **INTERVIEW**

Thirza Bonner and Jostien van Vliet of the Youth for Women's Rights Caucus attended the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York and report on their experiences.

**Recently you attended the conference in New York, Commission on the Status of Women. Did the conference meet your expectations? Are you satisfied with the results?**

We expected the CSW to be a battlefield where progressive and conservative views would clash. A political declaration with not much content, one page only, was adopted. We thought that the topic of trafficking would cause quite a debate. These expectations turned out to be right. However, we did not expect that as much as ten resolutions would be on the agenda during the second week. This high number of resolutions was a result of the lack of possibility to negotiate on the political declarations so many countries wanted some outcome to bring home.

Overall the results are not bad. Beijing was reaffirmed without reservations and some conservative resolutions, such as the one on the economic advancement of women, were transformed into more progressive ones. But we have to stay critical: for many countries and NGOs the stake was only the reaffirmation of Beijing. So a chance was missed to go beyond!

**In a prior interview we asked if you expected to meet many young people like yourself in New York? Did you?**

A couple of weeks before the CSW we started mailing with quite a few progressive young people and decided to cooperate in the Youth For Women's Rights Caucus. This Caucus had been active during the Beijing +5 process and continued during the ECE in Geneva, so we already had experience in working together. At the CSW the Youth for Women's Rights Caucus started with more than 40 young people, coming from all parts of the world, and from different youth organizations, but during the weeks, more young people joined.

The Caucus was a place where young people could freely discuss their views on sexual and reproductive rights, share information and set out strategies. During the CSW, Youth for Women's Rights played an active role in drawing attention towards sexual and reproductive rights and health, especially for young women. We were visible through our

newsletters (The Watchdog), fact sheets and red t-shirts, which carried our slogan "our bodies, our health, our rights" in English, Spanish, French and Arabic.

We enjoyed the support of a lot of other organizations, such as UNFPA, who provided space and other means for us to meet. We would like to give thanks to the Youth Coalition, which handled a large part of the organizational side of the caucus. It was very inspiring to work with all these young and devoted people towards a better situation for young women.

**There was much debate about conservative lobbyist (US, Arab world, Vatican) trying to influence the outcomes. What did you notice of that?**

Sometimes during coffee breaks we engaged in conversations with some of these conservative lobbyists. Their arguments actually made us sometimes feel sad, because many of these views cause a lot of harm and sorrow worldwide.

To give an example: one time we spoke with people who call themselves "Concerned Women of America". Their opening line was: "How can you human right activists say that we have equal rights? We are not born equal. Some of us are born blind, some of us are born with a limp and some of us are born completely morons." Then they continued by making references to God to explain why some human beings are less than others. These arguments were used to discredit the whole concept of human equality and human rights. This kind of conversations are used as openers to preach hate and intolerance and we did not want to be part of that any longer, so we excused ourselves, and went on with our work.

Another conversation that struck us deeply was with a Kenyan delegate. His opinion: our agenda was immoral, things as unwanted pregnancies do not exist and sexuality education leads to wrong behaviour. One hour later we were at the reception of the IPPF where we heard stories about Kenya: the reality is that one out of two girls under the age of 12 is being raped, and most often by her family. These horrible facts reminded us to the need to fight for a better world.

And that is why we value the wonderful people that we have met at the CSW. For example: Nafis Sadik, the former director of the UNFPA, or Leticia Shahani, one of the drafters of CEDAW. Or Cynthia Rothschild, who presented her book "Sexuality-Baiting and Attacks on Women's Organizing" which tells inspiring stories about women active in our field, who were attacked by conservatives but neither stepped down nor were defeated.

At the CSW we contributed in counteracting the conservative amendments that were proposed. For example, in the political declaration, the US wanted to put in an amendment saying "while reaffirming that they [the Beijing declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action] do not create any new international human rights and that they do not create a right to abortion" and the Holy See wanted to include a footnote. Just before the declaration was adopted, the US withdrew their amendment and the text was adopted as originally proposed by the Bureau.

In the second week the focus was on the resolutions. One was supposedly on trafficking but was in fact about prostitution, and especially about reducing demand. Though in the final resolution there are still links between trafficking and "commercial sexual exploitation", the resolution at least primarily refers to "all forms of exploitation, including commercial sexual exploitation" and is now connected with the Palermo Protocol and CEDAW.

Let us end by sharing a moment that was groundbreaking. During the closing sessions the US sought to adopt their resolution on the economic advancement of women.

South Africa called for an amendment because they wanted to see reproductive rights included in the text. That was something the US objected to, so the US called for a vote. Only the US and Nicaragua voted against the amendment.

Then Cuba called for an amendment to put a reference to CEDAW in the resolution. The US responded by withdrawing their resolution. Cuba stated that according to the rules, the US could not withdraw their resolution. In the end the resolution was adopted with a referral to CEDAW and reproductive rights, without the sponsoring of the US. Keep in mind it was originally a resolution

proposed by the US.

### **How was the media attention during the conference and in the US?**

We did not have much time to follow all the press coverage, but yes, there was a lot of media attention to it, especially to the political declaration. The New York Times contributed greatly in showing the strange position of the United States on their proposed amendment.

### **Is there anything you would like to share with others which you haven't mentioned yet? A topic in specific maybe from which you feel that it needs to be mentioned?**

Yes, we would like to share the Youth for Women's Rights statement. We hope to inspire many organisations and governments, to make sure, that in all the future obligations our needs are not forgotten and are better addressed. (*You will find this Interview with the Statement on <http://www.reproductiverightsandculture.org/> - Please click on the small blue arrow*)

### **CSW Youth Caucus - which organisations did they represent?**

- \* CHOICE for youth and sexuality, [http://www.wpf.org/choice\\_for\\_youth](http://www.wpf.org/choice_for_youth)
- \* DAWN, <http://www.dawn.org.fj/>
- \* Asociación Demográfica Costarricense, Costa Rica, <http://www.adc.or.cr/>
- \* Ipas, Care trainers in Kenya and Ethiopia, <http://www.ipas.org/english/default.asp>
- \* Lentswe Rona, Africa, <http://www.awid.org/go.php?list=analysis&prefix=analysis&item=00210>
- \* Profamilia, Colombia, [www.profamilia.org.co](http://www.profamilia.org.co)
- \* REPEM, Latin America, <http://www.repem.org.uy/repem.htm>
- \* YMCA, <http://www.ymca.int/>
- \* YouAct, Europe, <http://www.gert.ngo-bg.org/article50.html>
- Youth Coalition <http://www.youthcoalition.org/DEV/mambo2/>
- \* Asociación Panameña de Planificación Familiar, Panama, on [http://www.ippfwhr.org/profiles/association\\_s.asp?](http://www.ippfwhr.org/profiles/association_s.asp?)
- \* Also Youth Caucus members from Venezolana de Planificación Familiar, HELAM, REDLAC, Jóvenes de ASTRA. *During CSW other young people joined the Youth Caucus, like Jessie Giles, a Youth Member of the International Alliance of Women, Australia.*

### **The Watchdog, NAPY, the Youth Coalition's Quarterly Newsletter - on**

<http://www.youthcoalition.org/watchdog/engine.php/v3n3/47/>

Founding members of NAPY: all 27 participants from 15 countries in the Asia Pacific region namely Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam have become NAPY's founding members. Recognizing the need for a regional mechanism that will advance the concerns of the youth of the region, NAPY members agreed to carry out a broader coverage of youth issues in the area of health and rights. The issue of reproductive and sexual health and rights will be among its priority concerns for advocacy.

### **YOUTH at the UN - [www.un.org/youth](http://www.un.org/youth)**

On <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/index.html> you will find all kinds of programmes, conferences, workshops, the UN Youth Flash, the World Youth Report 2005 etc.

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