

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

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

IAW NEWS FLASH - March 2003, nr. 2



Equal Rights

Dear IAW members,

During the last weeks a stream of worried e-mail messages have been circulating between members of IAW, requesting us to raise our voices and join actions against war. And so we did, all in our own way. Was it in vain, now war is a fact? Not entirely, no. It made people think of other possible solutions against aggression in this globalising world. We read and e-mailed those sometimes illuminating thoughts around too. Also, we women have to keep speaking out for humanity and take action against senseless violence during wartime.

In this News Flash a first impression of the discussion on the two subjects in the Commission on the Status of Women: 1) Media and ICTs, and 2) Violence against Women and girls. See also the attachment: CSW, a Step to the Right.

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Following a week of intense debates and negotiations, the 47th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women adopted the Agreed Conclusions on “Participation and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women”.

Delegates were unable to adopt the Agreed Conclusions for “Women’s human rights and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls”. The CSW chair, Ambassador Othman Jerandi of Tunisia, suspended the session.

Gender, Media and ICTS

The last few points to deliberate on included:

- * the sexual exploitation of women through the traditional media and through new technologies;
- * inclusion of gender perspectives and gender-specific measurable targets in all programmes and projects on ICT for development;
- * the removal of ICT-related infrastructural barriers that disproportionately affect women and girls;
- * the need to support research in all aspects of the impact of the media and ICT on women and girls;
- * the provision of adequate and appropriate resources for innovative, affordable, accessible and sustainable ICT programmes, projects and products that support a gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

Pornography: delegates spent a lot of time discussing the need to urge governments to take necessary measures to combat the growing sexualisation and pornographisation of media output in terms of globalisation and the increasing privatisation of the media system. The group of G77 (a group of 133 countries) represented by Morocco, refused to compromise and deleted the need to urge governments to take action on this issue in the media.

Disappointedly, there was no substantive discussion on property rights, open source technology, and network security. Afterwards the Greek delegate, who represented the European Union, referred to “a document that we can build on” when taking part in the World Summit and Information Society (WSIS) in December 2003 in Geneva. Alas, a day before, the original text of paragraph 3 of Media and ITC had been changed. “Encourage the active participation in the Summit of gender equality and of women ICT experts *for at least 30% women* as members of national delegations and of organisations of civil society and the business community”, became: “*a high participation of women*”. By the same EU!

Women's Human Rights and Elimination of all Forms of Violence

At the end of the Session the delegate from Iran, with support from Egypt, objected to the inclusion of paragraph 'o' which reads: "Condemn violence against women and refrain from invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to its elimination as set out in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women". This was to replace the original text which read: "Refrain from invoking custom, tradition or practices in the name of religion or culture and religion etc. etc.". After a recess, the second one that day, and after consulting the UN legal officer, the CSW chair announced that the meeting was suspended until a later date, because translation was no longer available.

During the debates there was intense discussion, for example, on domestic violence, prostitution as a harmful practice, the right of women to have control over and decide freely and be responsible on matters related to sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health etc. Both NGOs and government delegates expressed disappointment that the 47th Session of CSW ended without Agreed Conclusions.

See for the result of the negotiations: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/47sess.htm

Armed and post-conflict situations

The delegations agreed, just days before the outbreak of the war against Iraq, on the following paragraph.

Paragraph cc)

Put an end to impunity and prosecute those responsible for violence against women committed in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict situations, such as murder, rape, including systematic rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy, support women's participation in conflict prevention and peace processes in line with all resolutions of the General Assembly in this regard as well as Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), consider the different needs of women and girls ex-combatants in planning for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, and address the specific dangers facing women and girls in situations of hostage taking and forced displacement.

At the same time, in excellent documented workshops on Trafficking and Slavery, NGOs learned about the stream of trafficked women who had followed the US military and peacekeepers in Korea and the Philippines. We saw on film interviews with US officers, who knew very well that criminals had taken away the passports and identity papers of the women. A code of conduct? Forget it! And ironic as it was, while we at CSW were talking on violence against women, the Security Council was meeting in the same building about war against Iraq, with the US planning to invade that country with 270,000 men.

See also the website of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women: www.catwininternational.org

Women say No to War

For International Women's Day all NGOs sent a unanimously accorded statement to the UN and demonstrated at 8 o'clock in the morning on Friday the 7th before the UN building. We had big signs with the text: "Women say No to War", written in many languages. It was freezing and we chanted and sang to stay warm. That morning, Hans Blix was telling the Security Council of his experiences with weapons of mass destruction in Iraq so we did not get much attention from the press.

An incident

In the afternoon there was a second demonstration of "black women". I heard the following story of that afternoon, told by IAW member Johanna Sterbin, International Federation of Women Lawyers and N. Saraswathy Devi, Barrister at Law, President of the International Federation of Women Lawyers.

Mrs. Devi: Friday at four o'clock we were attending the workshop on the Korean Comfort Women. I was not feeling very well and wanted some fresh air and with a friend (Johanna) we stood at E46th to get some fresh air. There was an Asian woman, holding a Peace sign. Two policemen came and without explanation they grabbed the sign, tore it in half and took her by the arms, one on each side. Then a police car came and suddenly there were 10 policemen around this young woman. They hurled her against the car and she was crying all the time. Devi was afraid they were going to break her neck, as they were so rough. She ran towards them and begged them to stop this, saying also: "My husband was a Chief of Police", but a policeman pushed her away. Johanna then pulled her friend away saying: "Devi, don't get involved", and Devi said: "I should

get involved”, but the police drove away with the woman in the car. Johanna commented later: “This was ironic when we are attending a conference about violence against women”.

Women say No to War, the Statement

Women from around the world representing millions of other women are gathered at the 47th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. We came to protest violence, and war is the most extreme form of violence. We oppose all wars around the world.

Women oppose war against Iraq. Authorising war in the name of peace undermines the very principles of the UN, which was formed to prevent the scourge of war. We reject the notion of a pre-emptive attack by any member state or states. This will not bring peace and security, only the global escalation of war and prolonged social instability.

Women and girls know too well the pain and suffering from the loss of life and the irreversible and devastating consequences of war; the long-term consequences of armed conflict continue to affect future generations. We reject the increased militarisation of our societies in the name of "security", as resources are diverted from social needs to military spending. This militarization costs millions of lives before a single bomb falls.

We recommend dialogue, broad consultation and diplomatic negotiations with the full and equal participation of women in compliance with Security Council Resolution 1325

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Human Rights Violations: Communication Strategies for Women

On Tuesday, 11 March, IAW organised a well attended workshop with the theme: “Opportunities for redress using the UN system”. It was introduced by Kay Fraleigh and Denise Scotto of the International Federation of Lawyers was moderator. Others attending included Philomena Kintu and Eleanor Solo of the UN/DAW Secretariat, Judith Gordon of the National Council of Women and Johanna Sterbin, International Federation of Women Lawyers /International Federation of Women in Legal Careers.

Read more in the newsletter and IWNNews!

Events and URLs

* On 17 March – 25 April, the 59th Session on Human Rights, Geneva. See www.ohcr.org

* On 24 March 2003 (from 10 am to 6 pm at ECOSOC Chamber) -- two dialogue sessions that will attempt to identify the major policy issues related to integrated approaches to rural development and to analyse goals established and commitments made in this regard.

* On 30 April 2003 a one-day meeting of the Council that will bring together Ministers, ECOSOC Ambassadors, agencies and organisations of the UN system, representatives of civil society, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, academia and others, to discuss measures to promote an integrated approach to rural development within the context of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development as recognised at UN Global conferences. As part of the meeting, there will be a number of roundtables organised by UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes on issues related to the theme. For more information regarding the High-Level Segment and its preparatory stages, please see the ECOSOC website at: <http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc/> or contact (ecosocinfo@un.org).

On 24 – 25 April the International Conference on Health and the Environment: Global Partners for Global Solutions, at the UN headquarters in New York.

* On 30 June – 2 July: Economic and Social Council High Level Segment, to discuss “Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development”. In preparation for the session, the Council will hold two preparatory meetings at UN headquarters in New York.

FOLLOW-UP TO UN CONFERENCES

A Working Group of the UN General Assembly is studying and will make proposals about the follow up to UN conferences, one of which is the women's conferences (Beijing et. al.).

The Working Group has been created in part out of the recognition of the need to shift into the implementation mode and to revitalise the political energy of conferences. Its mandate includes making recommendations on the architecture for implementation.

The Working Group concluded its second series of meetings in which delegates considered each of the agenda items and what their governments wanted out of this process. See agenda at:

<http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/253/85/PDF/N0325385.pdf?OpenElement>

The next series of meetings are scheduled for March 21 through April 4.

The Vice Chairs will be distributing a summary of the discussions. Look for it on the Working Group's website: <http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc/wgga/wgga.htm>

CONGO has taken up collecting NGO inputs about conference follow-up as part of its work with ECOSOC. The main governments and government groupings making statements and contributing comments are the G77 - China, Greece for the EU and Mexico. There seems to be relative agreement between the G77 and EU.

Note: to avoid misunderstanding, we always send the IAW Flash 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.

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