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IAW NEWS FLASH August 2005

Dear IAW members,

The situation at the UN is currently full of tension. The UN has to be reformed, after a period of 60 years of good work into the changed world of today. The problem is that at the moment criticism of the UN, for instance by the US administration, is trying to cross boundaries of already accepted agreements. Several of the 750 amendments by US ambassador Bolton are also threatening agreements which are essential for the international women's movement.

Will the UN member states be strong enough to keep those threats at arms length during the negotiations of the Summit ? Please be informed during the coming weeks and mail us your opinion!

To give you some food for thought, we are sending you an excellent article by the IAW representative of the UN, Kay Fraleigh

2005 at the United Nations: A Time of Reformation *Reflections on a Report and a Document*

by Kay Fraleigh
August 31, 2005

Without going into the 'why' of it, the Secretary General of the United Nations has presented a monumental challenge to the international community. It is a challenge to "pass on to our children a brighter inheritance than bequeathed to any previous generation." The Secretary General believes 2005 presents an exceptional opportunity to move in that direction and to reach a new consensus on which to base collective action. Heads of state and governments will meet in New York for the 2005 World Summit from the 14th to the 16th of September to take decisions on the broad ranging agenda - from development, human rights and security to the reform of the United Nations itself, as outlined in **the Secretary General's report, *In Larger Freedom***.

As chief executive officer of the United Nations, the Secretary General has given serious attention to strengthening, streamlining, and re-organizing the UN system to make it more effective, transparent, and accountable. Kofi Annan envisions a massive overhaul of the entire system.

The UN Councils

As the members of the International Alliance of Women (IAW) we are naturally concerned about where and how we may contribute to the new United Nations system.

Let's begin by examining the possible re-organization of the UN Councils, which will

surely have an impact on our work; particularly in relation to the proposed Council on Human Rights.

Currently there are three councils mandated by the UN Charter: the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, and the Trusteeship Council.

Taking up the role of the Trusteeship Council, we find its work is largely finished. It no longer meets. Its remaining functions are carried out by other UN bodies. It is proposed that the delegates at the World Summit will agree on deleting Chapter XIII of the Charter as well as references to the Trusteeship Council in Chapter XII.

Security Council Resolution 1325

Of the remaining original councils, the Security Council has demanded our attention since it has at last focused on women and peace. Particularly, in SC Resolution 1325 which expresses a commitment to women's rights and women's participation in the pursuit of peace.

On another level, the draft outcome document for the 2005 World Summit calls for a dedicated institutional mechanism to address the needs of countries emerging from conflict.

A **Peacebuilding Commission**, an inter-governmental advisory body, is envisioned as filling this role. Disappointingly, there are no specific requirements outlined for women's

involvement in the process. Will member states bear in mind SC Resolution 1325?

Because of the establishment of the IAW's Commission on Women, Peace, and Security, we will be following this issue closely.

ECOSOC

It is with the last of the three original councils, the Economic and Social Council that IAW has consultative status. As a result of the UN conferences and summits of the 1990s ECOSOC's role as related to the UN development agenda has grown. Today, the Secretary General sees the important functions for ECOSOC as coordination, policy review, policy dialogue as well as the forging of consensus by serving as a platform for the engagements among member states, international institutions, the private sector and civil society.

The **ECOSOC** commissions: on the status of women, human rights, population and development, social development, narcotic drugs, crime prevention and criminal justice, science and technology for development, statistics, and sustainable development, continue to be the focal point for the IAW's work at the UN.

Historically it has been the Commission on the Status of Women (**CSW**) that has fought the battle for the advancement of women and women's rights at the UN. At the first session, in February 1947, the CSW decided its terms of reference and coordination with the Commission on Human Rights and proposed that world public opinion be aroused to the need for raising the status of women as one means of promoting both human rights and peace!

In recent years, the work of the Commission on Human Rights has become a major focus for the IAW. This is largely because of its relationship with **CEDAW** and the general questions of violations of women's human rights.

Today, the Secretary General has called for the upgrading of the Human Rights Commission to a Human Rights Council with membership to be elected by the General Assembly. This is an important part of his vision for a reformed UN where the cause of human rights is taken as seriously as those of security and development.

The **Human Rights Council** would strive to reinforce human rights at the country level, maximize the potential of the human rights

- v. Address any matters or situations related to the promotion and protection of human rights, including urgent or continuous

treaties, enhance the work of the special rapporteurs and streamline the management of office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The draft outcome document proposed for the World Summit, describes the proposed Human Rights Council as, "a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly to be based in Geneva in replacement of the Commission on Human Rights. The General Assembly shall review within five years whether the Council should be transformed to a principle organ" (pg. 32). The proposed Human Rights Council mandates, size, and composition would be to:

- i. Serve as a forum for dialogue for thematic issues on all human rights and fundamental freedoms and make recommendations to the General Assembly for the further development of international law in the field of human rights;
- ii. Promote international cooperation to enhance the abilities of Member States to implement human rights commitments and international norms and standards including through the provision of assistance by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to Member States, at their request through programmes of advisory services, technical cooperation and capacity building;
- iii. Promote effective coordination and the mainstreaming of human rights within the United Nations System, including by making policy recommendations to the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and other UN bodies. The Council should also work in close cooperation with regional organizations in the field of human rights;
- iv. Periodically review the fulfillment by all States of all their human rights obligations, in particular under the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This procedure will not duplicate the reporting procedures being carried out under the human rights treaties;

human rights situations, and make recommendations thereon to the member States of the UN and provide policy

recommendations to the UN system”
(pgs. 32-33).

With the addition of the Human Rights Council to the strengthened UN councils the responsibility for the promotion of:

- 1) international peace and security
- 2) economic and social issues, and
- 3) human rights, by the three councils will be restored to a proper balance.

The decisions taken by the governments at the summits and world conferences could be addressed at the UN in a more cohesive manner. The process required to reach this ideal stage in the life of the UN will be long and drawn out since a final decision by the General Assembly on the role and structure Human Rights Council could take as much as five years.

Kay Fraleigh leads the IAW team at the United Nations in New York.

From the editors

Good informative websites ,with several links, are http://www.un.org/ga/59/hl60_plenarymeeting.html and <http://www.un.org/summit2005/>

For answers by the women's movement on the Summit - click on WEDO, and then on 'What is at stake': <http://www.wedo.org/files/presskit.html>

For a critical note from the women's movement on the last amendments on the Summit, click on - <http://www.ipsnews.net/>

For the latest information about the amended document – click on: <http://www.reformtheun.org/>

For the 750 amendments of the US administration, click on: <http://www.reformtheun.org/index.php/articles/1352>

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