

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

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

**IAW NEWSLETTER - October 2000**



**Equal Rights**

Dear IAW members,

*Good news for women all over the world: the CEDAW Optional Protocol will be ratified on 22 December 2000! We're also happy to tell you that another small step forward has been taken on the road to a new International Criminal Court. Steps forward too in 'Women and Armed Conflicts', but they are very very small. The process of Peace is in constant need of the support of us all. Women in Politics, one of the four issues of the Board Meeting, takes us this time to the political women of Thailand. And the Third UN LDC Conference: Rosy Weiss is sketching its background and is again urging our IAW members to contact her!*

**CEDAW Optional Protocol goes into Force !!**

With the ratification by Italy on 22 September, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has now been ratified by the required 10 countries. It will enter into force on 22 December 2000.

States which ratify the Optional Protocol recognise the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to consider petitions from individual women or groups of women who have exhausted all national remedies. The Optional Protocol also entitles the Committee to conduct enquiries into grave or systematic violations of the Convention. The Committee is the body established under the Convention to monitor its implementation.

On 6 October 1999, in a landmark decision for women, the United Nations General Assembly, acting without a vote, adopted the 21-article Optional Protocol to the Convention, and called on all States party to the Convention to become party to the new instrument as soon as possible.

The Protocol, which was opened for signature, ratification and accession on 10 December 1999, includes an "opt-out clause", allowing States upon ratification or accession to declare that they do not accept the inquiry procedure. Article 17 of the Protocol explicitly provides that no reservations may be entered to its terms. Only States party to the Convention may accept the Optional Protocol. With the ratification of Saudi Arabia on 7 September, the Convention has the support of 166 States.

During the Millennium Summit of the United Nations (New York, 6-8 September), ratifications to the Optional Protocol were received from Austria, Bangladesh, Ireland and New Zealand. Other States party to the Protocol are Denmark, France, Italy, Namibia, Senegal and Thailand. There is a total of 62 signatories to the Optional Protocol. The ratification of the Optional Protocol, and its entering into force on 22 December, represent further milestones on the road towards the achievement for all women of their fundamental human rights and freedoms. It is also a recognition of the universality of human rights.

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**INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT - ICC**

We received from the secretariat of the Coalition for the ICC the encouraging message that there are more ratifications now, **notably Russia** which ratified during the Millennium Summit. But let us first give some information about the ICC.

### **- ICC Update**

The International Criminal Court will be a permanent court that will investigate and bring to justice individuals who commit the most serious violations of international humanitarian law, namely war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and once defined, aggression. Unlike the International Court of Justice in The Hague, whose jurisdiction is restricted to States, the ICC will have the capacity to indict individuals. The ICC will be created on the basis of the Rome Statute, a treaty adopted on July 17 1998 in Rome at the United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries.

### **- When will the ICC become possible?**

The International Criminal Court will be established when sixty states have both signed and ratified the Rome Statute. As of now, 112 nations have signed the Statute, and 20 have ratified. The Coalition and like-minded governments are seeking to achieve entry into force as quickly as reasonably possible, a goal which cannot be realised without the support of civil society and governments all over the world. Women worldwide hope that the ICC will become a help against all sort of violence against women.

### **- Ratifications Chart, 15 September 2000**

**1999** - Senegal - Trinidad and Tobago - San Marino - Italy – Fiji - Ghana;

**2000** - Norway - Belize - Tajikistan - Iceland - Venezuela - France - Belgium - Canada - Mali - Lesotho –

New Zealand - Luxembourg - Botswana - Sierra Leone.

See also <http://www.iccnw.org>

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### **UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC)**

Vice-President Rosy Weiss who is, by the way very proud of her country Austria because it belongs to the first ten countries to ratify the Optional protocol, has sent us the following note.

LDC III will be held from 13 to 20 May 2001 at the invitation of the European Union. The venue is the European Parliament. On the agenda: interactive debates with NGOs over topics like governance, productive capacities, financing growth, international trade etc. and parallel events like: the fight against HIV/AIDS,

parliamentarians, meeting with local governments, a Women Entrepreneurs Forum, a business sector round table. The EU is supporting the participation of NGO representatives. There are also plans for a parallel NGO

Forum of LDC III.

Background:

*The 1st conference was held in Paris in 1981 and adopted the Substantial New Programme of Action. Lack of progress in the 1980s led to the 2nd conference in Paris in 1990 which adopted the Programme of Action for LDCs for the 1990s. A Mid-term Review of the Implementation of the Programme concluded that these countries continue to be marginalised. In 1997, the General Assembly responded to the marginalisation of LDCs by deciding to convene the 3rd UN Conference and designated UNCTAD as the focal point for the preparation of the Conference. The GA designated Mr. Rubens Ricupero, SG of UNCTAD as SG of the 3rd conference. Mrs. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, Special Coordinator for LDCs, has been designated as Executive Secretary of the conference.*

*Inter-agency consultations have been created for the UN system organisations and a Consultative Forum for all the stakeholders, including the host and civil society and private sector.*

As of end of January 2000, country-level preparations had been initiated in 39 LDCs. The European Commission has already informed its representatives in LDCs to provide support to the country-level preparatory process. In order to support this process, the EU has donated money to each LDC and other donors are invited to assist the shortfall.

This participatory process should lead to the formulation of a relevant and legitimate national level comprehensive programme of action for each LDC. These programmes will subsequently become the basis for formulating an umbrella global programme of action to be agreed at the Conference. Each LDC has already received a note to start the process.

The first preparatory meeting for LDC III took place from 24 to 28 July 2000 in New York with a parallel NGO meeting from 24 to 26 July 2000.

The first formal consideration of the draft Programme of Action will be undertaken at the end of January 2001. Inputs from country level and regional events (Dhaka, November 2000, Addis Abeba in November 2000) will be included in the revision of the draft.

#### **- Meeting on Women**

The Chairman of the Preparatory Committee will hold informal open-ended meetings in February and March 2001. Major inputs to the text will include the final versions of the country level programmes of action as well as the outcomes of the meeting of the private sector to be organised in Oslo, Norway, during 29-31 January 2001. **The meeting on women is to be organised during the 3rd week of February 2001**, and NGO preparatory events around the Conference. The final consideration of the draft Programme of Action will be undertaken in New York at the second session of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee in the first week of April 2001.

**The IAW has member organisations or individual members in: Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Haiti, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Sierra Leone, Togo, Uganda and Zambia.**

Rosy writes: National Preparatory Committees in the 39 LDCs have been initiated. **I would like our IAW member organisations to be involved in this process.**

Priscilla Todd writes: It is very important that the voices of IAW members be heard in these forums, which provide opportunities to speak on behalf of women and to improve the status of women

**Please contact Rosy Weiss as soon as possible at:** Veithgasse 9/6, A-1030 Vienna Austria

e-mail [rosa-anna.weiss@beinna.at](mailto:rosa-anna.weiss@beinna.at) See also: [www.unctad.org](http://www.unctad.org)

#### **Women in Local Government, Thailand**

More than 650 women in local government gathered at the UN Conference Centre in Bangkok on October 3rd, to Observe World Habitat Day 2000: Women in Local Governance. Women from all stratas of local governance in Thailand were represented, ranging from organisers in slum communities to Members of Parliament.

The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Mr. Kim Hak-Su, said that while women make up more than half of the population in the region's cities, very few women are able to reach positions of power in urban local governments.

*"The reasons are multiple: patriarchal social systems; social and cultural prejudices; financial dependence of women; lack of media support, exposure to political processes and training opportunities for women; family and child-care responsibilities; the high cost of seeking and holding office; and the criminalisation of politics."*

*Local government is the only level of government where women can enter political life with relative ease, as the costs of mounting election campaigns are relatively low and issues at the local level tend to motivate women to enter politics, he added. "Local governments also are good training grounds for women politicians who want to reach higher levels of elected or appointed office in government."*

Among the speakers, Dr. Chamniern Paul Vorratnchaiphan, of the Building Together Association, said World Habitat Day 2000 was a call for more equal and efficient partnership with women and more balance between men and women in managing cities. He said that:

*although a "good" start had been made in involving women in urban governance, it was still not enough. Women had become involved in urban governance in the more than 1,100 cities in Thailand. There were 81 female mayors of Thai cities and 209 female city clerks. In addition, in local communities women had taken greater initiative and responsibility for family income generation, especially in light of the economic crisis. "Urban poverty is still the*

*number one problem to be resolved in Thai cities," he noted, and concluded that "women make especially good urban managers in the development of clean and healthy, equitable and prosperous, sustainable communities and cities."*

Ms Suteera Thomson Vichitranonda of the Gender Development and Research Institute Public told the audience:

*"Recognition of women's contribution to the economic, social and political development of Thailand was limited, making it difficult for women to be in the frontline in the public sphere. As a consequence in Thailand, women represent about 6 percent of MPs and 10 percent of the Senators. Elected women in local administration at the district, municipality and provincial levels are even smaller in number, representing less than 10 percent. In committees concerning public policies at the national level, women form a negligible percentage. Yet women are half of the population," she added.*

ESCAP has been working on the issue of women in urban local governance since 1977. At present it is preparing for the Asia-Pacific Summit of Women Mayors and Councillors scheduled for early 2001. As part of its preparation for the Summit, ESCAP is overseeing the preparation of State of Women in Urban Local Governments reports in 14 countries of the region.

For more information, please contact: Mr. David Lazarus, Chief, United Nations Information Services, e-mail: [bkk.unescap@un.org](mailto:bkk.unescap@un.org)

### **Historic UN Open Session on Women and Armed Conflict**

On October 24, 2000 the United Nations Security Council will hold an Open Session on Women and Armed Conflict. Open Sessions of the Security Council are public and open to all member states of the UN, not just the 15 members of the Security Council. The Security Council will also hear from NGOs in what is known as an "Arria Formula Meeting" the day before the Open Session.

This is an historic occasion and we hope governments will send a high level expert to read a statement in the Security Council. We especially encourage NGOs to visit or write to their Foreign Ministry or the appropriate department that will be participating in the Open Session.

Talking points:

*While whole communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict, women and girls are particularly affected as members of the civilian population, refugees, internally displaced persons and as recipients of humanitarian assistance.*

*Many of the attacks on women and girls are of a gender-specific nature in situations of conflict world-wide.*

*There is a need for a more gender-sensitive approach to the protection of refugees and internally displaced persons.*

*There is a need for a more gender-sensitive approach to the administration of humanitarian assistance.*

*There is an urgent need for the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peace-building at the community, national and international levels to be recognised and utilised.*

### **- JOINT NGO STATEMENT**

A coalition of NGOs has been lobbying for this Open Session. They are preparing a first draft of a joint NGO statement which will be distributed widely for input and for signing. This will be read at the Arria Formula Meeting. For further information about this statement, and for information about prepared materials for distribution to Security Council delegations and a summary of key documents on the subject of women and armed conflict contact:

Felicity Hill, Director, Email: [wilpfun@igc.org](mailto:wilpfun@igc.org)

Websites: <http://www.wilpf.int.ch> and <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org>

### **From the Editorial Committee (EC)**

During the past two years the EC has been working on electronic communication between IAW members with e-mail. In this newsletter, just before the Board Meeting 2000, we would like to thank

all of you who have contributed to the newsletter by e-mailing us important, exciting, actual or even urgent news. Thanks too for those members who, like our diligent Administration Officer Pat Richardson, added new e-mail addresses to our e-mail list so we could enlarge our IAW networking. Wow, how we grew during those two years!  
With best wishes: Griselda Rosa Gomez, Cock Kerling (advisor), Lene Pind, Joke Sebus and Priscilla Todd.

*Note: to avoid misunderstanding, we always send the IAW Newsletter 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. The only difference is, that the attachment has a better lay-out, so it will be easy for Affiliates to copy it and send it by post to IAW members without e-mail. Please note too that the e-mail address of IAW Secretary Priscilla Todd has changed to [toddsec@golocal.com.au](mailto:toddsec@golocal.com.au).*

NB: We invite you to redistribute this Newsletter to IAW members without an e-mail address. Also, please advise us if you know of any IAW members or affiliate/associate organisations with an e-mail address, and in that case: please be so kind to contact Pat Richardson.

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