

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN

Equal Rights—Equal Opportunities
Droits égaux—responsabilités égales



Newsletter June 2017

no. 3

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Pay your fee for 2017

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Dear members and subscribers.

Come to Congress!

This Newsletter has important news about Congress and the reports that member organisations are expected to write for Congress, and which will be published in a booklet at Congress.

The President evaluates CSW61.

IAW representatives went to Geneva for the 70th World Health Assembly. See their report from the session.

We have activities reports from members in Zambia and Zimbabwe and an article on the rape culture of India.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS who have not yet paid their fee for 2017.

It's time to pay your membership fee as an individual member of IAW.

You can pay the € 20.-/year in two different ways. By bank transfer or by using the donation button on [our website](#)

Bank account:

Alliance Internationale des femmes

CH15 0900 0000 1488 7557 3 for CHF

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What a lot of voluntary work for women's rights you get for just €20 per year!

Congress 2017



The old town of Nicosia

Congress in Cyprus

"Eliminating violence against women and girls - Winning peace and prosperity in the world".

Secretary General Regina Smith has sent out papers pertaining to Congress.

One of the most important things that are going to happen are the elections of a new Board including President, Secretary General and Treasurer. So the papers contain forms to be used to propose candidates for the Board, a programme, general information etc.

Another important item on the agenda is a new action programme. Just after the Board Meeting in Zimbabwe, working groups were established to develop a new action programme. They will have finished their work before Congress, and hopefully we shall have fruitful discussions about what IAW and IAW members are going to work on over the next triennium.

The agenda for Congress has also been circulated, and if anyone has comments or additional items on the agenda, please send your proposals to Regina Smith at regina.smit@telenet.be

All the documents can be found on the [IAW website: http://womenalliance.org/events?event_id1=43](http://womenalliance.org/events?event_id1=43). This is a direct link.

Or you may go to www.womenalliance.org > Events> congress> read the kind invitation from Cyprus and scroll down. There you will find the documents. There are many, but they are all necessary, and they will be updated as we move closer to Congress.

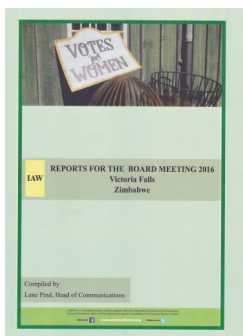
Congress is the most important of all IAW meetings. This is where we develop IAW policies, get acquainted with women's issues in the host country, meet old friends and make new ones.

Regina writes:

I hope to see you all in Nicosia Cyprus. Cyprus is a lovely place to be, not only for Congress but also for holiday and archeological sites. One day during our Congress program we are going on an excursion to Paphos. Paphos is the European Capital of Culture and has a famous archeological site.

Deadline for registration for Congress is August 15

More information about Congress may be obtained from Secretary General Regina Smit at regina.smit@telenet.be.



Booklet 2016

Booklet 2017

In connection with Congress, IAW's member organisations, international representatives, members of the extended board and other office holders are expected to report to IAW about their activities. This year members are asked in their reports to describe how their activities are related to the [IAW action programme](#).

Deadline for sending reports is September 1. Please, send your reports to Lene Pind at lenepind@gmail.com

Commission on the Status of Women 61

President's evaluation of CSW 61:

In her evaluation Joanna Manganara among other things stresses the following:

IAW has signed together with many other organizations a letter to Ambassador Patriota, Chair of CSW 61, concerning NGOs access to the negotiations at CSW 61. In the letter they say that over the last twenty years they have seen significant change in the way they have been doing their work. Less than 15 years ago NGOs were able to observe the negotiations and approach delegations on the floor of the UN Conference Rooms. In recent years their collaboration has been subjected to increasing restrictions limiting their capacity to work with member states to deliver strong Agreed Conclusions that make a real difference to the policy and legal settings that are used to realize women's human rights.



President's Letter

The President's Letter from May of this year deals with domestic workers. It is a thorough analysis of the situation of domestic workers. The title is:

WOMEN DOMESTIC WORKERS: Undervalued, Unprotected, Invisible. Click the link to read it on the IAW website.

Commission on Health



Gudrun Haupter, IAW Commission on Health has sent the following article:

The State of Health of Young Women and Obstacles to their Empowerment.

May 26 and 27, 2017 Italy hosted the meeting of the G7 leaders in Taormina, Sicily. The Summit focused on the global economy, foreign policy, security of citizens, and environmental sustainability. [Details are here.](#)

In preparation for the Summit a Forum in Rome "Starting from girls" reiterated that change starts from young women and charted an agenda for women's health and equality. Panelists included personalities of the Italian political and NGO spectrum. Of particular interest to the IAW Commission on Health was the intervention by Dr. Flavia Bustreo, Assistant Director-General at WHO, who presented the most recent data on the health of adolescents around the world:

Each year approximately 1.3 million adolescents die from avoidable causes. About 16 million young women between the ages of 15 and 19 give birth to a child, 49 out of 100 births are by women under the age of 20. Complications during pregnancy and at birth represent the second cause of death for adolescents worldwide. [Click here for more information](#)

How can this dire situation improve? Definitely not by omitting, for political correctness or for whatever other reason, to point to its main reason, young women's lack of autonomy over their bodies.

It seems to me that [CEDAW Art. 16 \(e\)](#) got out of governments' and civil society's sight. It gives women "The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights".

Stocks of free contraceptives are empty. Financial support for creating and maintaining the family planning infrastructure at community level is scarce where it is needed most, in low and middle income settings, particularly in rural areas. I'd also like to mention that the IAW Statement to [the World Health Assembly](#) in May 2017 includes our request to make emergency contraception accessible to all women who are of childbearing age, as a measure to reduce risky unsafe abortion, where safe legal pregnancy termination is not available or legally banned.

According to Dr. Bustreo's presentation, causes of death among adolescents include HIV, suicide, pulmonary infections, and violence. As to new HIV infections it is hardly surprising that 2015 data suggest women aged 15–24 years are at particularly high risk of becoming infected. As to suicide I quote Charlotte Feldman-Jacobs, program director for gender at the Population Reference Bureau: "It should come as no surprise to anyone that we are now seeing the 'feminization of adolescent suicide'. If you look at all the risk factors for suicide listed in the WHO report Health for the World's Adolescents: A Second Chance in the Second Decade, the group that would have the least power to overcome these barriers is adolescent girls." [Read more](#)

As to violence as a cause of death in adolescents, no gender-disaggregated data seem to exist. Well known is that globally, some 30% of girls aged 15



Starting from girls



**Committee on the
Elimination of
Discrimination
against
Women**

"A very demanding agenda"

International representatives

Geneva



Seema Uplekar and Ursula Nakamura-Stoecklin at WHA

to 19 experience violence by a partner.

To come back to the Forum in Rome April 9, 2017, it was based on the belief that strengthening young women's rights and capabilities is an essential element towards their transformation into potential envoys of change; its aim was "to create an international alliance on women's empowerment as a vital building block to a more sustainable and equitable growth" – definitely a very demanding agenda.

World Health Assembly

IAW statement to the 70th session of World Health Assembly

IAW representative to WHO, Seema Uplekar presented the IAW statement at the annual session of the [World Health Assembly](#) in Geneva.

Personal report from the session of World Health Assembly 2017 by Ursula Nakamura-Stoecklin.

Together with Seema Uplekar I had the chance to attend the 70th World Health Assembly WHA in Geneva.

In his welcoming address Mr. Alain Berset, Swiss Minister of Health, was urging his fellow colleagues around the world to work hard on implementing the goals of the UN Agenda 2030 on a global scale.

He particularly stressed five Ps, five key-targets: People – Planet - Peace – Prosperity – Partnership. In fact they all are interrelated, even if they encompass so many different aspects of life. Goal No 3 "Health" clearly states that everybody should get the necessary health care. Nobody should be left behind!

One of the main topics of this year's WHA was the election of the new Director General of WHO. The government delegates elected Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus from Ethiopia.

Does this new person have the same extensive knowledge of health problems, the same relentless energy and the same charisma as his predecessor Ms. Chang? So, of course everybody wanted to listen to Ms. Chang's highly inspiring and motivating farewell speech in the assembly hall.

Seema and I were happy to meet Soon-Young Yoon, IAW main representative in New York and exchange ideas with her.

One morning a young medical doctor representing the state of Iraq stated that with the ongoing fighting against IS, everyday life is very dangerous. Even so, it was possible to re-establish medical centres. She was happy to tell us that by re-opening consultation centres for women, Iraq was able to reduce maternal mortality and provide better protection for refugees. She emphasised that most of the times women are among the most vulnerable people.

Of course for Seema and me, the focus of our stay at WHA was women's health and this year especially adolescents. Fortunately Gudrun Haupter had prepared an IAW statement, which was officially presented by Seema: IAW website <http://womenalliance.org/>

Due to the brutal "Gag-Rule" enacted by the US President Trump, many health-centres, especially regarding family planning, are deprived of their urgently needed financial resources.

Therefore many NGOs are now working together to find new ways of funding. Remarkable in this respect was the WHA side-event "Adolescents as

Agents for Change” with the participation of state delegates and NGOs. Three very young women spoke. They had suffered discrimination and violence: rape, forced marriage or forbidden access to education. Fighting against this injustice they had all built their own pressure groups! Everybody was moved. The government representatives on the panel made realistic proposals for improving the situation.

Looking back at WHA once again I want to say thanks to Seema, who has introduced me so well at WHA.

Leaving no one behind: Equity, gender, and human right policy to practice.

Side event to WHA

“Leaving no one behind: Equity, gender, and human rights policy to practice”

Side event to the World Health Assembly

At this side event, which took place on May 26 **Soon-Young Yoon**, Chair of the board, WEDO, UN representative of the International Alliance of Women, First Vice-President of the Conference of NGOs (CoNGO) made the following remarks:

Excellencies, honorable ministers, colleagues and friends.

*Congratulations to the government experts who have shared their best practices to make sure that “no one is left behind.” As all of you have emphasized, instruments to measure inequality are more critical than ever and your efforts are inspiring. We are in a time when the fear of falling behind often seems every bit as great as the possibility of moving forward. But let us face the cold truth. Women and girls are not just being left behind—we are being **pushed** behind. Democratic spaces for feminists and women’s movements are shrinking. Religious and political sanctions uphold a culture of violence against women. Our human rights defenders and indigenous women protecting the environment are in very great peril.*

On the 21st of January this year, governments around the world were given notice that the feminist and women’s movements would not remain silent. In over 600 marches, 3 million people—young and old—and of all genders—marched together. In Washington DC where I marched, we chanted, “Women’s rights are human rights.” We called for an end to poverty, for the protection of clean air and water, for food security, equal pay for equal work, and universal health care. Some of my favorite messages were: “Keep your policies off my body ” --and this one-- “They tried to bury us—they didn’t know we were seeds. Finally: “Good science doesn’t lie—bad presidents do.”

In the United States, there is a vibrant campaign for cities to adopt the women’s bill of rights known as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women or CEDAW. The Cities for CEDAW campaign has already enlisted 50 US mayors who have signed resolutions or ordinances and 230 others who have agreed to the principles of CEDAW.

Members of my organizations, the International Alliance of Women and the Women’s Environment and Development Organization, participated in these marches. And while we believe in the power of public demonstrations, we also know that our attention has to be directed towards long-term solutions. This July, we will participate in the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). The theme will be “Eradicating Poverty and Ensuring Prosperity.” We will push for the full integration of gender equality into all of the other SDGs under review in this cluster. As representatives of the world’s women, we will fight for the recognition of the special roles and challenges for women and girls in Goal 1 on Poverty, Goal 2 to End Hunger, Goal 3 on Health, Goal 9 on infrastructure and industrialization, Goal 14 on Oceans, and Goal 17 on Partnerships.



Soon- Young (right) with directors and minister of health- Mozambique, Indonesia, Norway, Nepal and Mongolia

In partnership with you, we hope to advance important issues. First, women's empowerment and full enjoyment of our human rights will not be possible as long as there is gender-based violence. Bodily integrity and personal security are fundamental prerequisites for allowing women's voices to be heard. Second, we want to underscore that men and boys can make a difference. For the sake of mothers, sisters, friends and wives-- and the well being of the entire society-- male support for gender equality must be consistent and strong. Finally, we will demonstrate that gender equality and women's empowerment is good, solid economics. Women's leadership contributes to stronger GDPs and will help accelerate progress on all the SDGs, including on health and the environment.



Despite the troubling political currents against women and girls, I believe that we are seeing the rise of a spirit of resistance that gets stronger every day. When governments create walls of silence at home, advocacy at the UN becomes more critical than ever. What you do—and the stands you take—are vitally important in this arena. Thank you to the WHO and to governments for your part in helping to strengthen an inclusive, democratic space here and around the world because that makes Health for All possible.

European Women's Lobby



Arina Angerman, Representative of IAW in Board European Women's Lobby (EWL) :

Uncover Anti-Feminist Workings of Right-Wing Populist Parties.

[In this article European Women's Lobby \(EWL\) has focused on France \(Front National\), the Netherlands \(PVV\) and Germany \(AFD\).](#) The three parties share 'an Islamophobic view of Islam as the primary threat to women's rights, and they also share an opposition to gender quotas – FN and AFD are explicitly opposed to all forms of gender quotas, and the PVV voted against a proposal on gender quotas on company boards in the Dutch Parliament'.

Since General Assembly 2016, EWL and its members are mapping right-wing populist anti-feminism that is spreading across Europe. This article is one of the results. Read also a 2nd article on the [Dutch Elections 2017 from a feminist perspective](#). PVV also voted against the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and against FGM legislation.

Istanbul Convention

Good news! The Council of the European Union has - 11 May 2017 - agreed on EU's signature of the Istanbul Convention = Council of Europe (CoE) Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. 'It is indeed time for the EU to walk the talk when it comes to violence against women. Finally, 22 years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform for action.' [Read more at EWL website](#)

Until now Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands and Portugal among others have ratified, and Cyprus, Germany, Greece and Switzerland have signed but not yet ratified! [Read more about who signed and ratified at CoE website](#)

IAW around the world

Women's Comfort Corner, Zimbabwe

Conversation Cafe - Epworth

On the 24th of May, 2017 we hosted a conversation café which was conducted in Epworth. School children, the youth and the community attended the café. The children managed to bring out issues that are happening in their communities, which included domestic violence, drug abuse and child abuse. The problem of gender based violence is acute in Epworth. Girls are victims of sexual coercion by male relatives, classmates and neighbours. Children born and living with HIV/AIDS expressed concern about the issue of stigma

and shaming.

Start by believing Campaign

Women's Comfort Corner Foundation is spearheading the Start By Believing Campaign in Africa. WCCF will cascade the Campaign by transforming the way we react to all forms of abuse. From Africa, Zimbabwe in particular, to Canada, advocates around the world united on the Second Annual Start by Believing Day to change how we respond to rape, domestic violence and child abuse. On the 5th April 2017 - 10 May 2017 Women's Comfort Corner Foundation hosted public events, in an effort to increase awareness and garner support for survivors of violence. End Violence International, the organisation based in USA, Washington which coined the campaign, created a slideshow to share with the participants. The events and images are so inspiring and can be viewed on the following link: <https://vimeo.com/212993394>. The theme for this year's Start by Believing Day is **Systems Change**. The campaign has reached over **13 241** people in Zimbabwe. End Violence Against Women International has long worked toward the goal of creating systemic changes on local, state, national levels and International levels, because failed responses can equal additional victims. In order to stop this cycle and make our communities safer, we must Start by Believing. Women's Comfort Corner also hosted the start by believing campaign in Musina, South Africa. The Campaign is ongoing.



No 2 from left:
Edah Chimaye

Zambia Alliance of Women

- report by Ms. Edah Chimyae, ZAW

In the past 5 years ZAW has been instrumental in advocating for Women Participation in Agricultural Decision-making, Environmental Sustainability and Women Land rights. For example, in partnership with Zambia Land Alliance, Non-Governmental Organization Coordinating Council (NGOCC) and Action Aid, ZAW implemented a project which aimed at advocating for women empowerment with productive resources including land as well as building capacities of women in conservation farming and sustainable land management. ZAW has also been implementing awareness raising activities on environmental policies and climate change, training in sustainable natural resources management, and advocating for gender equality in cooperatives as an entry point for women to participate in decision-making in the agricultural sector.

[Read more](#)

India

Wolves of Lust

Anjana Basu, All India Women's Conference, has written an article about India's rape culture for the IAW website.

In the article Anjana Basu writes among other things:

The problem is the objectification of women and an underlying belief that they can be used as battering rams. In a country where daughters are destroyed, gender violence is a part of everyday life, a woman on her own is fair game to a patriarchal society, or even, as in the Nirbhaya case, a woman out in the evening with her boyfriend. In the Nirbhaya case, the woman clung onto life demanding that her rapists be burned alive for destroying her life. Others have not been so fortunate – their violators have done an efficient job of killing them after the rape and disappearing into the night.

[Read the whole article](#)

Around the world

Indonesia



Watch also this video about the [Mathera rape case](#). On March 26 1972 a young tribal girl was raped by two policemen. After the Supreme Court acquitted the two men, there was public outcry and protests, which eventually led to amendments in Indian rape law.

"Female Islamic clerics declare rare fatwa against child marriage"

Indonesian religious scholars urge government to raise legal age for marriage for women from 16 to 18 in what is believed to be first major meeting of women clerics "

This is an interesting article from *The Independent*. After a congress in Indonesia, female scholars of Islam decreed that child marriage should be banned .

One of the most important outcomes of the congress was a fatwa calling on the government to raise the marriage age from 16 to 18.

Gudrun Haupter, Convener on IAW Commission on Health has the following comment:

To my knowledge the article with its links has the most comprehensive information on the current picture regarding child marriage and on efforts to come to grips with the harmful and still widespread tradition.

The link also leads to other forms of sexual violence and their consequence on <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/renata-cameroon-army-aunties-protect-girls-sexual-abuse-vulnerable-violence-early-pregnancy-a7738006.html>

This link is of particular interest to us because the Aunties' network RENATA is a member of IAW, figuring as Réseau national des associations de tantes, Cameroon.

New series on HBO

The Handmaid's Tale

The Handmaid's Tale

Many readers of the Newsletter may have read the Canadian writer Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, the story about Offred, a handmaid in the state of Gilead. She may leave the home of the Commander and his wife once a day to walk to food markets whose signs are now pictures instead of words because women are no longer allowed to read. She must lie on her back once a month and pray that the Commander makes her pregnant, because in an age of declining births, Offred and the other Handmaids are valued only if their ovaries are viable. They have been reduced to "wombs on two legs"

A new HBO series has been made on the basis of the novel. UK paper *The Guardian*, writes about this new series:

[The Handmaid's Tale review – the best thing you'll watch all year.](#)

The series has Elizabeth Moss as Offred, and she is brilliant.

The series is of current interest, more so than the producers expected when they first started working on it. This is due to the backlash against women's rights that the world is witnessing, not least as a result of the new US administration

Read what Margaret Atwood herself has to say about her book and the series

[What The Handmaid's Tale Means in the Age of Trump](#) (New York Times, March 10, 2017)

IAW Editorial Group: lenepind@gmail.com

International Women's News: iawiwn@womenalliance.org

Membership Officer: iaw.membership@womenalliance.org