

Attachment 14

WHY CoNGO? WHY NOW? WHY the INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN?

More than ever, it is important for international bodies like CoNGO to facilitate interaction with the UN, provide an open, democratic space for civil society, and help shape the UN's vision for the 2030 sustainable development agenda. As a member and leader within CoNGO, the IAW can join in this international effort.

1. Why now? First, there are new challenges posed by the 2030 Development Agenda that require women's organizations to work across many sectors and regions. Although there is a specific goal (Goal 5) on gender equality and women's empowerment, the key to success will be to work with other partners (Goal 17) and ensure that gender equality becomes integrated into all goals. This kind of cross-linkage strategy requires strengthening ties with international NGOs that are not focused on gender equality and women's empowerment as well as sister organizations.

2. Why CoNGO? With over 300 full members, CoNGO is one of the largest international NGOs that weaves together members from all sectors and all regions. Although it is open to many kinds of NGOs, its "full" members must be ECOSOC-accredited NGOs which gives it special standing in relationship to the UN. Among full CoNGO members are Baha'i International, the Jordanian Center for Human Rights, Catholics for Choice, World Jewish Congress and the World Muslim Congress, the World Federation of UNAs, and the Russian Peace Foundation.

In the era of fundamentalism and backlash, we also have to strengthen our ties with other international feminist and women's organizations—many of which are members of CoNGO. Full members of CoNGO include the All China Women's Federation, the All India Women's Conference, the All Pakistan Women's Association, The Center for Women's Global Leadership and WEDO. Others include the Bahrain Women's Association, Socialist International Women, and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. (For full listing see <https://www.ngocongo.org/membership/full-members-listing>).

3. What is the role of "CoNGO committees"? The role of the CoNGO committees is to help facilitate an open, democratic space so that NGOs can interact with and influence the UN processes. Members of CoNGO often work through its "substantive committees" such as the NGO CSW/NY, the NGO CSW/Geneva and the NGO CSW/Vienna. The UN can give these substantive committees special roles and UN DESA regularly refers ECOSOC-accredited NGOs to join CoNGO. Indeed, in the past, CoNGO has been called upon to help organize NGO Forums such as the NGO Forum held during the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and the NGO Forums during CSW.

In Geneva, the CoNGO committees work on issues such as ageing, disarmament, human rights and women. In New York, the 21 substantive committees cover a wide range of topics such as mental health, indigenous peoples, sustainable development and freedom of religion as well as women. In Vienna, the substantive committees work on issues such as gender equality, human rights and peace. In addition to these, there are four committees on the status of women in the regions of Africa, Latin America, the Arab States/MENA and Asia and Pacific.

These committees include many international CoNGO members. For example, the NGO CSW/NY has members from all regions of the world who participate in online interaction and receive early notification of UN events and CSW documents. The Committee on Sustainable Development holds side events during the HLPF and its members living outside of NYC help to plan events and present statements.

4. Why does CoNGO need the IAW? The IAW has a great deal to offer CoNGO—with its rich history in the women’s peace movement, expertise on issues of violence against women, health, and peace, and regional expertise as well as a strong global network. If the IAW remains a member of the board, it can help to develop CoNGO’s leadership in the era of the SDGs and use CoNGO as a platform to showcase IAW’s commitment to equality, development and peace within a women’s human rights framework.

5. Challenges for the future The IAW can help to shape the agenda and meet challenges to strengthen CoNGO. The IAW members may wish to consider these questions: What can be done to improve communications among CoNGO members? Can CoNGO members work on joint statements for CSW and the SDGs? How can CoNGO help the IAW enlarge its membership and improve its visibility? What ideas do IAW members have to make CoNGO more useful to IAW’s mission? How can the IAW participate more in CoNGO committees?