

**COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN 63  
THE UNITED NATIONS  
NEW YORK  
March 12 to 23, 2019**

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**Personal Notes for the Period  
Hally Siddons  
Canadian Federation of University Women, Delegate  
March 9 to 18, 2019**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Introduction .....</b>  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Themes for CSW 63 .....</b>   | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>CSW63 Forum Consultation Day .....</b>  | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>CFUW Caucus .....</b>   | <b>14</b> |
| <b>CFUW Members Attending Caucus Meeting and CSW63 Delegates .....</b>   | <b>15</b> |
| <b>GWI Breakfast Briefing #1:.....</b>   | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Middle East and North Africa –<br/>Changing Laws, Changing Minds .....</b>                        | <b>17</b> |
| <b>Council of Europe Istanbul Convention: A Global Instrument for Preventing and<br/>Combating Violence Against Women and Girls.....</b> | <b>20</b> |
| <b>Women in the Media. ....</b>  | <b>21</b> |
| <b>Lunch with Dr. Samar .....</b>  | <b>22</b> |
| <b>The Prevention of Sexual and Gender- Based Violence and the Role of Modern<br/>Technologies .....</b>                                 | <b>23</b> |
| <b>Women’s Empowerment Through a Holistic Approach to Education .....</b>  | <b>25</b> |
| <b>Dinner with CSW Woman of Distinction, Palm Too .....</b>  | <b>26</b> |
| <b>GWI Dinner, a second dinner, but the company not to be missed! .....</b>  | <b>27</b> |
| <b>Adopting the SDGs to the Local Context .....</b>  | <b>28</b> |
| <b>On the way to Biarritz: Women’s Rights and the heart of the G7 Summit .....</b>   | <b>30</b> |
| <b>CSW63 Townhall Meeting of Civil Society and UN Secretary-General, Antonio<br/>Guterres .....</b>                                      | <b>32</b> |
| <b>NGO CSW Forum Reception At The New Yorker Hotel.....</b>  | <b>35</b> |
| <b>Meeting with Hon. Maryam Monsef.....</b>  | <b>37</b> |
| <b>The Promise Of Global Citizenship Education &amp; The Power Of Digital Literacy:..</b>  | <b>38</b> |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Afghan Women and Sustainable Development: Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities .....</b>   | <b>39</b> |
| <b>WG-USA, CFUW and Mexico Collaboration Meeting, UNITAR Building, New York City .....</b>  | <b>44</b> |
| <b>Women at the Table! Transformative Change – Women Shaping the Agenda of Peace, Transitional Justice and Political Agreements .....</b>                                   | <b>46</b> |
| <b>CFUW Dinner For CFUW Delegates, Canadian NGOs and International Colleagues .....</b>   | <b>48</b> |
| <b>GWI Breakfast #2 .....</b>   | <b>49</b> |
| <b>Social protection systems, and sustainable infrastructures for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and other perspectives from Afghanistan .....</b> | <b>50</b> |
| <b>Ministerial Meeting.....</b>   | <b>50</b> |
| <b>WG-USA Lunch .....</b>   | <b>51</b> |
| <b>Egypt: Responding to Women Refugees from Syria.....</b>  | <b>51</b> |
| <b>Women’s Shelters: The Heart of Social Protection Systems .....</b>   | <b>53</b> |
| <b>Refuge Denied: Women in Crisis at the US/Mexico Border.....</b>  | <b>55</b> |
| <b>GWI Combined Meeting with CFUW, WG-USA and other GWI non-delegates.....</b>  | <b>58</b> |
| <b>Film Screening: Women, Peace and Power – the Stories of Women Peacemakers from Northern Ireland, Afghanistan and Liberia .....</b>                                       | <b>58</b> |
| <b>The Road to 2020: Accelerating Action on Women, Peace and Security Before the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 1325.....</b>   | <b>61</b> |
| <b>The CFUW CSW63 Oral Statement Presented in G.A. Conference Room 2.....</b>   | <b>66</b> |
| <b>Concluding Thoughts .....</b>  | <b>72</b> |



**COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN 63  
(CSW63)**

**UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK**

**March 11-22, 2019**

**Introduction**

It was a privilege for me to once again attend the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations in New York, and this year as a member of the CFUW Delegation.



The seventeen member delegation was ably led by Joy Hurst, VP International Relations, working with Grace Hollett, CFUW National President. I thank them for their warmth and leadership. Indeed it was a delight to work with all CFUW delegates from across the country over the course of the week. Nothing seems to prepare one for the hectic pace and breadth of the week but each day was truly new and exciting.

The Commission on the Status of Women is a commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and was established by Council resolution in 1946. It is the principal intergovernmental body that is exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

As such it communicates the reality of women's lives throughout the world. It monitors and reviews progress and problems in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and promotes gender perspective in UN activities.

The active participation of non-governmental organizations like CFUW is a critical element in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women. Together we have been influential in shaping current global policy on women's empowerment and gender equality. We continue to play an important role in holding national and international leaders accountable for the commitments they have made in the Platform for Action.

Preparation for CSW is extensive and results in the compilation of official documents for the CSW sessions. NGOs may apply to have an opportunity to participate. CFUW submitted beforehand a Written Statement with the support of five other organizations. CFUW was also asked to present an Oral Statement at the conclusion of the week.

The ten-day session includes:

- Ministerial segments with round tables and other high level interactive dialogues
- A general discussion
- Side Events at the UN with interactive and expert panel discussions
- Events at the Permanent Missions to the United Nations
- And many Parallel Events off the UN premise open to the public and organized by participants to draw attention to critical aspects of the work on gender equality

The principal outcome of the CSW is the Agreed Conclusions, which contains an analysis of the priority theme and a set of concrete recommendations for governments, intergovernmental bodies, other institutions, and civil society, to be implemented at international, national, regional and local levels. In addition to the Agreed Conclusions, CSW adopts a number of resolutions on a range of issues.

## **Themes for CSW 63**

**Priority Theme:** Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;

**Review Theme:** Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development (the agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session).

**Sunday, March 10, 2019**

## **CSW63 FORUM CONSULTATION DAY**

**Sunday, March 10, 2019. 9:00 to 3:20**



Despite the poor weather Sunday morning, the Tribeca Performing Arts Centre filled promptly with women from around the world registered at CSW63 anticipating the beginning of what would be an action filled week and one in which they hoped they could make a difference for women and girls back in their home countries.

The mood was invigorating as delegates socialized briefly recognizing faces from the past and meeting new ones. But then according to plan, the programme began with a lively performance of drumming and internationally flavoured music. It was energizing and very powerful.

*Courtesy of Marianne Singh-Warraich*

- 1. SUSAN O'MALLEY**, Chair NGO Committee on the Status of Women/NY, and International Federation of Business and Professional Women, welcomed all delegates. CSW63 is the largest Commission gathering in the history of the United Nations. Some 9000 delegates will be attending over 400 Parallel Sessions, workshops, and many Side Events at the UN. This is all in an effort to move the feminist agenda forward.



As Dr. O'Malley so empathetically said, for many of us, the Priority Theme for CSW63, "*Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls,*" was difficult at first to understand. Social protection is about a vision of society grounded in human rights and gender equality that has ideally attracted more attention after the fiscal crisis of 2008.

According to UN Women, "*Social protection is a set of minimum guarantees, including basic income security for children, working-age adults, older people and people with disabilities, as well as essential health care for all.*"

Dr. O'Malley continued that for social protection systems to be effective, they need to be provided by national governments. Governments need to be supportive of the idea of solidarity among the rich and poor with redistribution occurring through taxation. She insisted that women needed to participate in the decision-making about social protection. If social protection systems are to work, there must at the same time be investment in infrastructure and in quality public services.

But in reality, global inequality is growing. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. Taxes on the wealthy are being cut. This is resulting in austerity and the cutting back of public services. How do we move forward on social protection? This will be very important as national governments implement Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- 1. On poverty
- 2. Zero hunger
- 3. Good health
- 4. Quality education
- 5. Gender equality
- 6. Clean water,
- 7. Decent work and
- 8. Infrastructure

Many sessions this week will discuss social protection systems in education, health, participation of women, cash transfers, widows, universal basic income, family payments, infrastructure, justice and employment. The problem is that sustainable infrastructure takes funds!

**2. PHUMZILE MLAMBO-NGCUKA**, UN Under Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women, talked about the importance of empowering women and girls



but to do so social protection is very important. How do you define social protection and why is it so important? The gathering of civil society during CSW63 will provide a critical opportunity to build strength and support around this priority theme.

The speaker reminded us that important progress has been made in improving women's and girls' access to social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure, but gender gaps and biases do remain. Women are the ones who have the burden of care but in many parts of the world they are not taken into account. Consider:

- 41 percent of the world's mothers with new-born children receive a maternity benefit, with regional coverage as low as 16 percent in Africa;
- Women's access to sexual and reproductive health care services has improved but the quality of this care is often not sufficient;
- Critical infrastructure, such as safe sanitation, is lacking in 23 percent of the world's schools. This is significant because it disproportionately affects adolescent girls with menstrual hygiene and education needs.

How do we move forward to address together the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development? There is still a long way to go before our commitments become actions and change becomes irreversible. Indeed, we are witnessing an increase in resistance to gender equality and a pushback to progress already made. To overcome and prevent a backslide and non-delivery for 2030, we must accelerate our work.

3. **H.E. AMBASSADOR GERALDINE BYRNE NASON**, Permanent Representative Mission of Ireland, Bureau Chair, Commission on the Status of Women began by asking, what is the answer, how do we take the idea of gender equality forward? Some governments do not realize the importance of investment in infrastructure. Governments impede themselves by not providing. Policy is one thing but evolution and practice of the policy are another. Civil society needs to continue what it is doing. The governments will listen.



This is the first time we are discussing social protection. The dial is shifting but unfortunately not in our direction. Women are looking for power over themselves, not power over men. We need to free up women's time and head space to enable them to do the work that needs to be done.

We need to use the energy of the #Me Too Movement to change possibilities. It is activating women - especially young women. We can use technology to send messages far and wide. We need to raise the volume and keep the sound up.

We need to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of UN Women and prepare for the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Beijing. We cannot afford not to have an Agreed Conclusion in the next two weeks. We need to work together to ensure the outcome is an agreed outcome this year. Psychologically this will be very important this year. We need to "keep the ship floating." We need to keep the noise louder as we move forward in order to drown out the forces that are pushing us back.

4. **KEYNOTE ADDRESS:**  
**WOMAN OF DISTINCTION, GHARSANAY IBNULAMEEN**,  
Youth Empowerment and Leadership Organization, a grassroots organizer from Afghanistan.



At 22, Gharsanay is the youngest ever recipient of the Woman of Distinction Award. She is concerned not only with girls' education but with ethnic harmony in her country. She works with President Ghani and with elders in 21 districts to engage them. Young people in Afghanistan are trying to shape their future and use every available resource to do so. There is a dire need

for change and people at the grass roots level want it. Girls' education is the way to bring this change. With the leadership training that Gharsanay has organized, girls come to better understand themselves. They see themselves as effective forces for change. At the moment 1 in 3 Afghan girls attends school. That means 2 out of 3 do not. Women around the world need to face personal danger to keep advocating for girl's education. The time has come for women to step up and take part in the leadership. Empowered women need to stand up with all women. Women need to be involved in the peace process. She dreams of a united country and connecting women's voices is very important. Her work is dedicated to making a world she has not seen but in which she firmly believes.

Finally, in her words, "This is a great opportunity that I as a young Afghan woman can change the narrative about Afghanistan and show this beautiful and prosperous side of Afghanistan to the world... It will be a representation of the strength of Afghan women and an opportunity for their voices to be heard across the world."

## 5. CLIMBING POETREE: ALIXA GARCIA & NAIMA PENNIMAN



Powerful presentation of poetry.

## 6. PANEL: SOCIAL PROTECTION: DEFINITION, CONTEXT AND VISION



- **Moderator: Hon. Marilou McPhedran, Senator, Canada**
- **Vinicius Pineiro**, Deputy Director, Office for the UN, International Labour Organization
- **Nadia Daar**, Head of Washington Office, Oxfam
- **Memory Kachambwa**, Executive Director, FEMNET, Kenya
- **Corina Rodriguez Enriquez**, Argentina, DAWN

### **Vinicius Pineiro:**

If you want peace you must incorporate social protection. Social protection protects but it also empowers. We must discuss not only what is needed but what it is. It must be anchored in sustainable finance. We should not only agree on the conclusions but we should raise the bar.

### **Nadia Daar:**

She has a focus on advocacy. She has worked to influence international financial institutions as a route to sustainable development. In 2017-18, a new billionaire was created every two days. Such dizzying amounts of wealth are often on the backs of others. A billionaire earns in just 4 days what a worker earns in a lifetime. Inequality is growing and most often at the expense of women. "Twenty-six individuals earn as much as the bottom half of this entire globe". Governments need to have a universal policy for public protective services and care. Governments must make political choices to provide substantial funding. Let us not lose hope but keep the pressure on through the sessions of this forum.

**Crystal Simeoni:**

She continues to fight for individual equalities at the village level and takes them to higher levels in 48 countries in Africa. Economic policy for women is unequal.

**Corina Rodriguez Enrriquez:**

She worries about the right wing shift in governments. Not only is there a challenge to improve what we have gained, but also a need to protect it. It is important that workers have rights. They must have a minimum wage that can provide security. There is so much that companies can do too – not just governments.

**7. LUNCH:**

A few of us met at a nearby restaurant for lunch. We had learned in the past that one had to be organized with such as the time flew by. Indeed, it was pleasant to enjoy some comradery and review highlights of the morning before heading back for more!

**8. 2019 RECIPIENT OF CITIES FOR CEDAW GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AWARD**

- Mayor William Peduto, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- Mayor Peduto was presented to us in a video and thanked for his ongoing work.

**9. LOOPA BANERJEE, Director, Civil Society Division, UN Women**



Civil society and women’s rights organizations were instrumental in creating UN Women and remain at the forefront of its work. 2019 is a pivotal year in pushing the gender equality issue forward. Just ahead is:

- 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action
- 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sustainable Development Goals
- 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Security Council Resolution 1325 and
- The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the creating of UN Women

Yet, in 2019, no country has achieved gender equality. One in three women are likely to face violence in their lifetime. We have seen progress but we are seeing rollback in these gains. As we move forward NGOs will continue to play an important role in holding international and national leaders accountable in their commitments towards gender equality.

## 10. PANEL #2: PROMISING SOCIAL PROTECTION SCHEMES

### Iceland – Equal Pay

Helen Inga Stankiewicz Von Ernst  
2nd Secretary, UN Mission of Iceland

### Peru – Zero Hunger: Cooking with a Cause

Tanis Goossens, Country Director, World Food Programme

### Nepal – Ending Violence against Dalit Women

Sarita Pariya  
SAMATA Foundation for Social Justice

### Namibia, Kenya, India – Widows Need Social Protection

Heather Ibrahim  
Global Funds for Widows

### Egypt – Safe Transportation for Women

Angela Mwai, Leader  
Gender Equality Unit Programme Division, UN-Habitat

### Bangladesh – Ending Child Marriage

Sean Southy, President, PCI Media

### Moderator:

Asa Regné, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women



A series of panellists gave powerful examples of gender issues in their countries and creative ways in which they were being dealt.

### Heather Ibrahim:

Widowhood is a huge issue in many countries. Who is defined as a widow? Then there are defacto widows. Had the marriage been registered? Has the husband just disappeared? Is he actually deceased? There is discrimination.

Maybe she cannot even inherit her own children. Widows can face loss of income, disinheritance, discrimination, harmful traditional practices, cleansing etc.

Namibia ranks high in dealing with widowhood.

## **Iceland**

The speaker from Iceland was from the Prime Minister's Office. The delegation leader on this file is the Prime Minister. In 2015 Iceland celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women's suffrage. Iceland is a world champion in gender equality 10 years in a row. For example, an employer has to prove by certification that he does not discriminate in the workplace.

## **Tania Goossens**

In Peru food is a major source of pride yet many locals have anemia, chronic malnutrition, or poor eating habits. Many programmes have now been set up to feed children and many soup kitchens. Cooking classes have been offered. "There is new energy that comes with hope." Food is being used for social change.

## **Sarita Pariya**

One out of every 6 women in Nepal and India are Dalit or "untouchables". They have a far higher risk of being raped or harmed in some way. There is a discrimination based on birth. It is time for UN action on cast-based discrimination but it requires new ways of thinking and doing.

## **Angela Mwai**

Angela talked about safe transportation for women. Walking is the principle form of transportation. People need to have proximity to their work. Public streets for many are not safe. The mobility needs for women are different from those of men. Women may have more trips and not in peak times. They carry heavy loads to and from the market as the women look for firewood, water, and collect their children. Women seldom have their own cars. Yet they need transportation to enable them to work. Angela talked about a special toolkit for a Gender Structured Minibus. There are buses but they are not large. Many crowd into a small space. Many harassment issues happen on the bus. Cairo has designed a gender sensitive bus that serves 130,000 passengers a day. Mobility is a human right and if it is achieved, no woman will be left behind.

## **Sean Southey**

Sean Southey talked about ending child marriages in Bangladesh. They are using social media to discourage. There are public service announcements, each targeting different audiences. There are very effective videos – we saw a couple of them. There is a distinctive clapping rhythm that has become familiar to publicly note participants and almost shame them at least into thinking twice about going ahead with the child marriage in question. A phone number to call to report such is flashed on the screen.

The Angel Band Project concluded the official Consultation Day programme.

## **CFUW CAUCUS**

**7:30 to 8:30 PM**

Joy Hurst, CFUW VP, International Relations and head of the CFUW Delegation to CSW63, chaired a meeting of all delegates so that she might share any new information, review plans for the week, and introduce us to one another. It was a welcome occasion and a chance to relax before the busy week that was about to begin. Thank you, Joy, for organization and leadership.

## CFUW Members Attending Caucus Meeting and CSW63 Delegates



**Front Row:** Sandy Millen, Chair, Local Arrangements Committee, 2019 AGM, CFUW-Winnipeg.

**Second Row**, left to right: Hally Siddons, UWHAW External Convener, CFUW-Ottawa, and National Afghanistan Study Group, Chair; Barbara Tyner, Mexico City & Kelowna; Lynne Kent, VP Membership, & Chair, Membership Committee, Vancouver; Grace Hollett, National President, St. John's, Newfoundland; Brenda Robertson, National Alumnae Chair, North Bay, Ontario; Godelieve De Koninck, International Relations Committee, Quebec City;

**Third Row**, left to right: Sandy Thomson, VP Ontario, Mississauga; Sandra Shaw, President, CFUW-Perth and District, Portland, Ontario; Shelly Ball, Environmental and Climate Change Sub-Committee, Westport, Ontario; Teri Shaw, Education and Advocacy Committees, Oakville, Ontario; Joy Hurst, VP International, Chair IR Committee, Edmonton, Alberta; Barb DuMoulin, VP British Columbia, Salt Spring Island, BC; Patti Johnsen, RD Alberta, Lethbridge, Alberta; Marianne Singh-Warrick, GWI Delegate, Burlington; Lynn Bird, VP, CFUW Aurora/Newmarket, Aurora, Ontario; Lisa Long, VP, CFUW North Bay, North Bay, Ontario; Kathryn Wilkinson, VP Education & Chair, Education Committee, Mississauga, Ontario.

**Monday, March 11, 2019**

**GWI Breakfast Briefing #1:**

**7:00 to 8:00 AM**

**Le Pain Quotidien**

GWI Members at the CSW63, not only with the GWI delegation but with other delegations, were invited to meet over breakfast with other GWI members from around the world. GWI VP Advocacy and Education, Hazel Bowen, welcomed us.

It was a great opportunity to mix and learn a little more about each other's work. Also present were Stacy Dry Lara, GWI Executive Director from Geneva, and two of the GWI Reps to the UN, Dr. Sophie Turner Zaretsky, and Maryella Hannum. GWI is represented at four key United Nations centres in Geneva, New York, Paris and Vienna. Our UN Representatives champion the GWI mission by participating at UN meetings in New York and reporting back on various topics being discussed by international policy makers.

Members who attended the breakfast were from Australia, Senegal, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, Zimbabwe, the Netherlands, Rwanda, Canada, and the US.



GWI Members Join for Breakfast

## Women's Economic Empowerment in the Middle East and North Africa – Changing Laws, Changing Minds

8:15 to 9:30 AM

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Oxfam, Tunisia and UN Women



**Moderator:** **Eva Johansson**, Lead Policy Advisor, SIDA and Co-Chair, OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality

**Keynote Address:** H.E. Neziha Labidi, Minister of Women, Family, Children and Seniors Affairs, Tunisia

### **Speakers:**

**Mohammad Naciri**, Regional Director for Arab States/North Africa, UN Women.

**Nickie Monga**, Country Director, Oxfam in Jordan.

**Charlotte Goemans**, Policy Analyst, OECD.

**Dr. Soukaina Bouraoui**, Executive Director, Centre of Arab Women for Training & Research.

The panel discussion centered around four key issues underpinning women's economic empowerment:

- Legislative reform
- Social norms/local traditions
- Access to resources/opportunities and
- Women and men's attitudes

MENA refers to the geographic area, Middle East and North Africa. While women in this region are more educated than ever, the number participating in the labour force in the area continues to be the lowest in the world. The OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index estimates that in 2017 the impact of discrimination in laws, social norms and practices costs the MENA region a staggering USD 14 billion. While progress is fragile there are success stories that can inspire change.

The OECD, Oxfam, UN Women and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency jointly hosted this side event. They all support programmes of reform in the MENA area.

**H.E. Neziha Ladodi**, Minister of Women, Family, Children and Seniors Affairs, Tunisia

Recent reforms to deal with empowering women defines gender equality as being indivisible. It cannot be divided. In 2018 Tunisia held its second forum on gender equality. It was hosted by the head of the government. There is a demand that women's access in any given level be the same as men's. For positions i.e. judges, equal numbers of resumes will be submitted for men and women. We rejoice at Tunisian exceptionalism. It is in their genes. For a long time it has advocated for women.

As of March 8, 2019, women in rural places have access to social security through software. Ninety per cent of women in rural places have cell phones. This means now that 2 million rural women across all society have social security benefits. Now women have guaranteed prenatal leave and 1 month paid leave after the birth of a child. She also has an additional 4 months at 50% of her salary and arrangements can be made for paternity leave. Children of Tunisian mothers automatically receive Tunisian citizenship. Human rights are for all, not just rights for women and rights for men.

**Mohammed Naciri**, Regional Director for Arab States/North Africa:

Patriarchy is still alive in all regions in the minds of men and boys but in the hearts of women and girls. There is a vicious cycle of violence - people grow up accepting it and then they practice it. As a young boy you model your father. Younger generations are still very conservative. There is much they feel they cannot control but they can still control their own private sphere. We need to engage in education, media, cultural norms and religious discourse.

**Nickie Monga, Country Director, Oxfam:**

We need to invest at the formal individual level to access resources ie supporting women's training. We need to invest at the informal level, invest in self. We need formal change that is legal reform to i.e. access to credit. We need informal, systemic change. No matter how much we reform the laws, nothing will change without changes in the social norms.

We need to ensure women are involved in policy review and change. *"Nothing about us without us"*. We need to promote a legal environment in line with international human rights and labour policy. We need to settle norms such as, women cannot:

- Drive a truck
- Work a night shift
- Serve at a petrol pump

Government has to lead from the front and harness power of influential people in the country – companies, actors, government leaders and sports leaders.

We need to implement positive business practice – i.e. flexible working hours, maternity leave, paternal leave etc.

**Charlotte Goemans, Policy Analyst, OECD:**

We do research so countries can build policy built on research. The momentum for change is in the MENA region. Current reforms are complex in nature. We can all learn from each other as no country has reached full gender equality.

All reforms have to address gender issues. Who are involved in MENA reforms? – heads of state and civil society. The difficulty comes in the political arena. We build on evidence and we listen. We then try to bring people together. "We want better policies and better lives for all." Having policy in place is important, but it is the take up of those policies in the regions that are crucial.

Tunisia in 1993 abolished the rule that said men decided what the women would do. There was to be mutual respect within the family. In 2014 a law stated that the state must work on the full human rights of women. Minds have evolved. The line of inheritance is vital. Things have changed and among other things lines of credit have been created. The work continues but all is challenging because of lack of funding.

# Council of Europe Istanbul Convention: A Global Instrument for Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Girls

10:00 – 11:15 AM

## France and Council of Europe



The Istanbul Convention adds significant dimension and positive force to the existing international instrument of violence against women and girls, and women's rights. It starts where CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) left off. CEDAW addresses women's rights but does not include a section on violence. The Istanbul Convention codifies standards already in place and moves them forward. It moves them to a level where they can be closely implemented by governments. We are now talking about gender-based violence, violence against women. The Istanbul Convention is the most comprehensive convention but there are others. It is based on zero tolerance. It establishes a clear link between gender inequality and discrimination, and violence against women. It states clearly what is criminal – stalking, rape, forced marriage, FGM etc., and is relative in all parts of the world.

## Asa Regnér, Deputy Executive Director of UN Women:



There is resistance to gender equality in the world right now but there is more interest than ever before. In the Security Council we see that progress is very slow. "The rhetoric is good but the reality is too slow." There is usually cooperation between NGOs and governments but there needs to be more with men and boys. The Istanbul Convention is open to all member states. So far 34 member states have signed on, another 11 intend to do so after sorting out a few issues. In addition the EU has signed on. The Convention has no hidden agenda.

## **Women in the Media.**

**11:30 – 12:45 PM**

It is important to have women visible in the media.

### **Deputy Minister of Education, Argentina.**

How can policy promote inclusivity? Free press is important in any democracy. Media has a great role to play in creating thought. It is important to have women in media. They influence the way people think, and stereotypes that need challenging. For example, they can discuss with publishers and review what is in school text books. They can do research and show the numbers. Again, working with men is important. Some men are now saying that they will no longer be on an all-male panel. As a politician the Deputy Minister said she is hopeful. Showing diversity in media is a top objective.



Other panelists talked about fighting gender stereotypes in media. Women need to not only be in front of the camera but they need to be directors and producers. Media has a multiplier effect on society. “What is not mentioned does not exist.”

## Lunch with Dr. Samar

12:15 PM



Dr. Samar was able to meet with me briefly to review UWHAW reporting expectations with Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education in Kabul where we provide funding for girls' scholarships. We talked about the current political situation in her country and our concern for the security of our funding. There is not just the threat of the Taliban but also ISIS and warlords. Dr. Samar does not think the Taliban will take over the country but there is grave

concern. Unlike before there is now in place an army, and some security. There are young people now who do not want the rule of the Taliban – 400,000 graduates per year and there are many women who are standing up. Indeed there is a lot of resistance in the country to the Taliban. However, sadly the whole issue will not be solved quickly. She felt the Taliban could not get access to the banks as such entities as the World Bank were involved. But, all said, still a tremendous concern as other sessions of the week confirmed.

It was lovely Dr. Samar took time out of her busy schedule to see me but we did want to talk about *University Women Helping Afghan Women's* (CFUW-Ottawa) work with Gawharshad. In the end we were able to have lunch together. I had hoped I could have arranged a chat time with other interested delegates but she was just not able to plan far enough ahead, needing to fit in meetings as they arose – alas, another time.

# The Prevention of Sexual and Gender- Based Violence and the Role of Modern Technologies

1:15 - 2:30 PM

Estonia, Sierra Leone, Canada and Liberia

**Keynote Speaker:** Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict

**Other Speakers:**

**Hon. Maryam Monsef**, Minister for Women and Gender Equality, and Minister of International Development, Canada.

**Ms. Williametta Saydee-Tarr**, Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection of Liberia.

**Ms. Riina Sikkut**, Minister of Health and Labour of Estonia

**Ms. Asa Regnér**, Deputy Executive Director of UN Women.

**Ms. Baibndu Daaama**, Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

**Ms. Kalliopi Mingeirou**, UN Women, Chief of Ending Violence Against Women Section

**Moderator:** Ms Jane Connors, UN Victims' Rights Advocate ASG



Sexual and gender-based violence is a serious crime. It can have profound short and long-term effect on the mental and physical health of its victims. Some of the consequences can include:

- Sexual and reproductive health problems
- Increased risk of suicide
- HIV
- Stigmatization

In addition many survivors are often ostracized from their communities and disowned by their families. In zones of conflict these issues are even more severe.

Further steps need to be taken to ensure that acts of violence are prevented.

- Norms of society must condemn all forms of violence
- Sexual violence must not be treated as an inevitable consequence of war
- Victims must not be blamed
- Perpetrators must be held accountable
- Efforts to document and investigate international crimes should become deterrents.

Many countries have laws against sexual assault and other forms of violence but the implementation of these laws often falls short. More needs to be done to prevent violence in the first place.

Systems for victim support need more attention.

- Fast first aid with counseling and medical examinations
- Gathering and preservation of evidence during medical examinations
- Counseling by well-trained specialists to support victims
- Post-treatment

Information and communication technologies should be used to help with all the above. But in many countries the cost of purchasing and maintaining the software is prohibitive. We must be dealing with solutions not just tools.

These were just some of the points shared by the presenters. In Senegal terrorist groups generate funds through abduction. The stigma that the survivors face often hinders their recovery and there is often a lack of access of medical help.

Hon. Maryam Monsef from Canada reminded the young women in the room that they were the most powerful generation that ever lived. They have the most powerful tool we have ever known. Invest in women's organizations and partner with the private sector. G7 partners are proudly working together. It is important these technologies get developed and it is important women are at the table. Youth needs to be leading a discussion on gender-based violence as it occurs on line.

The female members of the panel told of how they all receive threats on line – it just comes with the job. One panelist did go to the police and in the end her culprit was found and was sent to prison. More of this needs to happen.

We learned of issues in Sierra Leone but there is hope now a new government is trying to put things straight. In Liberia we learned of a strong women's movement. There almost every woman has a cell phone. During the war 15 years ago, some 275,000 women were sexually violated. There is still a spillover but there have been many interventions. Now all government hospitals must provide certification for victims of rape and much new legislation is in place to deal with the issue. It all goes back to the community. The community must come together.

In Estonia as everywhere, people need to work together.

# Women's Empowerment Through a Holistic Approach to Education

4:30 PM

A Parallel Session at 4W 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, Blue Room  
Sponsored by Graduate Women International  
Speakers and Presenters:

**Jennifer Rigg**, MPA, Executive Director  
**Prof Jaya Dantas**, PhD, MA, FPHAA (GWI/AFGW)  
**Prof Shirley Randell** AO, PhD (GWI/AFGW)  
**Nayana Maria Guerrero Ramirez PhD Student** (GWI/FEMU)  
**Nsanga Sylvie Rwiyereka** (GWI/RAUW)  
**Nolwazi Ncube PhD Student** (GWI/ZAUW)



This was a packed parallel session well received by all in the room. Unfortunately my notes are brief as I was late in arriving and had to leave early but I did want to attend as I could. It is always a privilege to hear Professors Shirley Randall and Jaya Dantas and was an honour to meet for the first others on the panel.

To quote their flyer:

*“The CSW63 theme of social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure highlights essential components of women empowerment. This panel discussion emphasizes the need to incorporate these components into a holistic plan that supports the personal development of women for a meaningful achievement of gender equality/women’s empowerment and in turn, the SDGs. A discussion of the case studies shows that education can become truly transformative when it is not narrowly -defined within the context of the workplace or economy but to women’s human rights and personal empowerment.”*

Each speaker addressed the topic from her own unique perspective and experience.

## Dinner with CSW Woman of Distinction, Palm Too

6:00 PM



I had the great privilege of attending a dinner in honour of the CSW63 Women of Distinction, Gharsanay IbnulAmeen, and as luck would have it, being asked to sit at her table for dinner.

It was a lovely small dinner for 50 arranged by the NGO Committee. Please refer to my earlier notes on Consultation Day for a little more about Gharsanay. She is indeed a remarkable young woman doing truly remarkable things in her country today. I did not want to compromise her position and so did not draw her into political questions. She is indeed concerned about her country and the women in her country but I have seldom met such a courageous and enthusiastic young woman. She crosses Taliban lines to do her training but she is determined.

## **GWJ Dinner, a second dinner, but the company not to be missed!**

**7:30 PM**

Several GWJ members from around the world joined for dinner at Ali Baba's Restaurant. Such an interesting mix of women, great conversation and excellent food. Thank you to Hazel, Stacy and Maryella – a most enjoyable evening! With just the right timing between, I was able to fit in two very special events.

**Dr. Sophie Zaretsky, GWJ UN Rep**



It is always a delight to hear Sophie speak. We were so sorry to learn that Dr. Maureen Byrne, one of the other GWJ UN Reps had fallen the day before and was not able to join us but we welcomed also Maryella who had done much of the planning for our dinner. These women work tirelessly and at their own expense throughout the year preparing for CSW and ensuring GWJ's and thus our voices are heard. We also very much missed GWJ President Geeta Desai at CSW this year but she had to excuse herself for a special family occasion



**Tuesday, March 12, 2019**

## **Adopting the SDGs to the Local Context**

**10:00 AM**

Jordan, Tunisia and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)



Jordan has worked for some time to promote women in legislation and to adopt a national strategy to advance women in line with the SDGs. There have been many achievements and there have been joint efforts of national committees and NGOs to bring all to the government. The government has been responsive. Some legislation on the books has been cancelled such as Article 308 which had given the rapist the right to marry his victim.

One challenge to be faced is the increase in immigrant women and how to provide the social help they need. And for Jordanian women, there is the challenge of their economic reality. Culture and infrastructure such as transportation effect their ability to work. A large percentage of women still stay home because of lack of transportation to work or risk of harassment on the way.

**H.E. Neziha Labidi**, Tunisia, Minister of Women, Family, Children and Senior Affairs spoke of the current situation in Tunisia. I ask you to refer to my notes from Monday's 8:15 Session on *Changing Minds, Changing Laws* to review the situation in Tunisia today.

Tunisia and Jordan are looked at as models for other countries in the region. They have both excelled in adapting the SDGs and in raising awareness and support at the government level. Tunisia and Jordan are sources of inspiration for many women throughout the Arab world. Jordan's success is attributed to its Civil Society. Other countries may know about the SDGs but have not moved on yet. Tunisia will not let anyone take away their laws, their progress. Responsibility is joint, equality is right.

#### **ESCWA Chair:**

Acceptance and progress in the Arab countries are not homogeneous. Support differs in the context of each country. We make sure Goal 5 is part of all other goals. Each country has to plan to match its own political and economic situation. Sub committees have been formed to bridge the gap between regional and national levels.

Yet challenges remain:

- There is occupation, war and conflict in some countries
- There are partnerships but the expectations are low.
- There are limited technical and financial resources
- They lack data, a problem in most of the Arab countries
- Some countries do not believe VAW (Violence Against Women) is a problem. Other countries have legislation and policy.
- Few have VAW in their Constitution. Some countries may know about the SDGs, but have just not acted on them yet.

The speaker reminded us that regional cooperation is very important.

## On the way to Biarritz: Women's Rights and the heart of the G7 Summit

Tuesday 11:30 AM

France, Canada, and CARE France



### Panelists:

**Ms Marlene Schiappa**, Secretary of State for Gender Equality, France

**Hon. Maryam Monsef**, Minister for Women and Gender Equality, and Minister of International Development, Canada

**Ms N'Tchin Ephrasie Coulibaly**, President of young ambassadors for reproductive health and family planning network, Ivory Coast

**Ms H elene Marie Laurence Ilboudo**, Minister for Women, National Solidarity and Family, Burkina Faso

**Ms Katja Iversen**, Director of Women Deliver, Gender Equality Advisory Council, G7

**Ms Lyric Thompson**, Director of Policy and Advocacy at the International Centre for Research on Women

**Moderator: Ms Sophie Chassot**, Advocacy Officer on Women's Rights, CARE France

Marlene Schiappa clearly set the scene of this high-powered Side Event. France is happy to carry on from Canada and the progress made at the 2018 G7. President Marcon and Prime Minister Trudeau are working closely together.

The 2018 G7 Summit in Canada made key commitments to advance women's and girls' rights. Following this, France has chosen to fight for gender equality as a key priority theme for the G7 in France in 2019 and move along the agenda. The 2019 G7 offers a tremendous opportunity to adopt new ambitious commitments, both political and financial, to promote women's and girls' rights within G7 countries and beyond.

Yet all over the world including in developing countries, women and girls face discrimination and inequalities regarding their access to and control over resources and power. Their rights are often violated. G7 leaders will need to hear women's and girls' voices and take action to fight such inequalities globally.



Hon. Monsef confirmed the importance of the gender equality work done at the 2018 G7. It is the right thing to do. When women do well, the country does well. The economic case for gender equality has been made. A lot of work has been done in the past. All roads now lead to France and meanwhile Canada will host *Women Deliver*. Women are at the table. When women are at the table, peace is more enduring and prosperity more sustainable.

The speaker from the Cote d'Ivoire told us there needed to be further implementations in her country and finances were also a challenge. More maternity care is needed, access to education for both boys and girls needs to be promoted, family services need to be available within schools, and more women need to be in the cabinet.

Ms Iversen admitted expectations were big. Heads of government, Ministers, and Civil Society note that this does not stay in a report. This becomes real.

The Minister from Boko Faso reminded all that people are equal under their law – men and women. We need to protect women against violence. We need to keep girls in school. Less than 60% of the students in high school in her country are girls. Early marriage and undesirable pregnancies are still issues. Free contraception is provided by the government but resources are needed. There are many social and cultural variables. If we cannot ask parents to ask their daughters to abstain, we have to explain the need to protect these young girls and think about the consequences for their country. We need to offer more scholarships to young girls, especially in STEM which in many countries is totally dominated by men. The constitution has a 30% quota for women's participation in government but there are only 10 % in the general assembly and 7 ministers in the cabinet. In addition the country faces the issue of insecurity. It faces attacks by terrorists although all seems to be under control at the moment. In concluding the Minister said her country had the capacity but training was needed.

## CSW63 Townhall Meeting of Civil Society and UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres

1:15 – 2:30 PM

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres participated in a town hall meeting. It was moderated by Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka, Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. CSW63 delegates were able to ask the Secretary-General questions on topics pertaining to gender equality and the work of the UN.



*Courtesy UN Women/Ryan Brown*

The Secretary-General opened the session with some general statements about the UN.

- Parity is essential
- Sexual harassment is not to be tolerated
  - The main obstacle to introducing the concept of Zero Tolerance was that many involved thought it would not work. The UN has now in place an Investigation Team of 6 female sexual harassment experts to review UN practices around the world.
- The UN is determined to end impunity.
  - Sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by UN staff anywhere in peacekeeping missions around the world will be dealt with.
    - We were given the example of an opportunity for 1000 people to be re-settled from a massive camp a few years ago to Canada. There is a huge pressure on whom to choose and a tremendous power in the hands of those who make the decision. It sometimes has been a challenge on how to learn of any such undesirable incident and to punish someone miles away in an isolated area.

He then looked at the UN and the outside world.

- There is still violence against women in conflict situations.
- There are a number of Human Rights questions. Human Rights defenders are being persecuted and this persecution is increasing. Yet the trend to address human rights is reversing.
- Hate is speeding through the internet at an alarming rate. This harassment affects many aid workers.
- Legislation in some countries is moving backwards on reproductive rights.

We all need to push back against the pushback.

### **Discussion:**

The Secretary-General then opened up the session to questions from the audience. I incorporate his reply to each point raised.



- In Nicaragua there is violence against human rights workers and advocates. How are human rights to be protected when the government has pulled its country out of the UN? The UN has tried to intervene but its offers were not accepted. It learned the opposition groups have left the discussion. The UN High Commissioner is paying great attention to the issue and so it is not going unnoticed. It is not just talking about criminal problems but about criminal gangs who control many parts of the cities.
- Many potential delegates were not allowed to come to CSW63 because they could not get visas. Instead we see their pictures on protest banners. The UN strongly activates that visas should be given to all women and delegates. The UN will keep trying.
- Widows of all ages must be a focus. But then there are also half-widows, those whose husbands have “disappeared”. The UN is working with a special agency on this matter but it is frustrated because much information has been lost. Have they been killed? Are they in mass graves, or have they been sent to a place where no one can find them?
- Strategies for LGT have been developed but in some parts of the world the UN is seeing pushback and there are attacks on social media.
- Mexico has a new president now and a Mexican who spoke was concerned the country would regress. It is not working with Civil Society and incorporating equality in its planning.
- The question came about the UN supporting women with disabilities in all processes. There is a Special Rapporteur for such issues and she is to ensure all departments have this visibility in their mandates.
- Indian female workers have organized. They are feeling a pushback. The speaker invited the Secretary-General to meet with them. If he could give her 30 days notice she could produce 20,000 women to speak to him. The Secretary

General did note her concerns but also acknowledged the corporate community who had intervened in many parts of the world.

- An Argentinian lady held up a baby's garment and asked what could be done about baby kidnappings. She had her baby stolen from her and has never been able to find her. She was urging the establishment of a genetic bank and that it be installed around the world. Secretary Guterres was very interested in her comments and suggested perhaps a committee could be struck for such work.
- An issue was then raised concerning women on hard drugs in Nigeria. The Secretary-General acknowledged the issue of drugs was complex because there were many opinions. Investment in effective support for work in this field is decreasing.
- The issue of blockading husbands of Qatar women was raised, husbands from non-friendly countries. The speaker's husband had been blockaded now for three years. The UN has intervened but sadly there has been no practical solution to date.
- A Ukrainian woman spoke of the urgency for a solution. War is still going on and effecting families and children. A group of Ukrainian women have come to the UN now with a plan. They have solutions for peace. They want to be heard and they will need international assistance.
- The question of sexual violence in refugee housing was raised by a woman from the Congo. She had experienced it first hand in the Congo. She urged that women sit at peace tables. Although she lost both her husband and brother, the speaker was a survivor who said she knew the importance of girl power. The Secretary-General again confirmed his belief in the importance of women at the Peace Table. At recent Syrian Peace Talk 2 teams of all men were brought. The UN then brought in a team of women to work with them in the discussions. Having women at the Peace Table brings results and sustainability.
- Another delegate introduced herself as a Ugandan refugee. One can survive the horror of war but now there is often the horror of sex trafficking and kidnapping. She told the story of boys being kidnapped and killed and then their organs were removed to sell through cyber trafficking. The Secretary-General acknowledged the horror of war and that women need to be having women at the Peace Table to bring results and sustainability. Sadly, he admitted the world has been ineffective in dealing with human trafficking. Most attention is given to drug trafficking. We hear of people going to prison because of drug trafficking but seldom does one hear of anyone going for human trafficking.
- An Iranian woman spoke to talk about the thousands of women arrested now across Iran. Often then they are collected and subjected to mass rape. The situations of many are horrible. Every year there is a report on Iran submitted to the Secretary-General, a report on the violations of human rights. Whether or not these women should be in jail is one question but their treatment there, another.



## NGO CSW Forum Reception At The New Yorker Hotel

6:00 to 8:00 PM

The Forum Reception is a lovely opportunity for delegates to meet socially and enjoy each other's company and in many cases, native dress.





**Wednesday, March 13, 2019**

**Meeting with Hon. Maryam Monsef**

**10:00 AM**

Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN  
466 Lexington Avenue East 45<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> Floor

CFUW was grateful to the Hon. Marilou McPhredran in coordinating the opportunity for this meeting and to Hon. Maryam Monsef for adjusting her schedule to accommodate.

This meeting was a marvelous opportunity for CFUW to share briefly with Minister Monsef some of its advocacy on child care. In addition to our group of about 10, there was an Indigenous Group present and a few other individuals.



Chair of the Education Committee, **Kathryn Wilkinson**, supported by other members of the CFUW delegation shared some of our concerns about Early Learning and Child Care. She said we were all in agreement that Canada needed a universal, affordable, accessible and high quality Early Learning and Child Care System. She thanked the Federal Government for the 7.5 billion in designated spending that was announced in the 2017 Federal Budget. However, she went on to say that that sum represented only half of what was promised by Paul Martin in 2004 and it represented only 0.3% of Canada's GDP. It falls significantly short of UNICEF's international

benchmark of 1% GDP. The renewal of the bi-lateral agreements with the provinces is scheduled for 2020. Kathryn called on the government to increase funding to meet the recommended international benchmark of 1%.



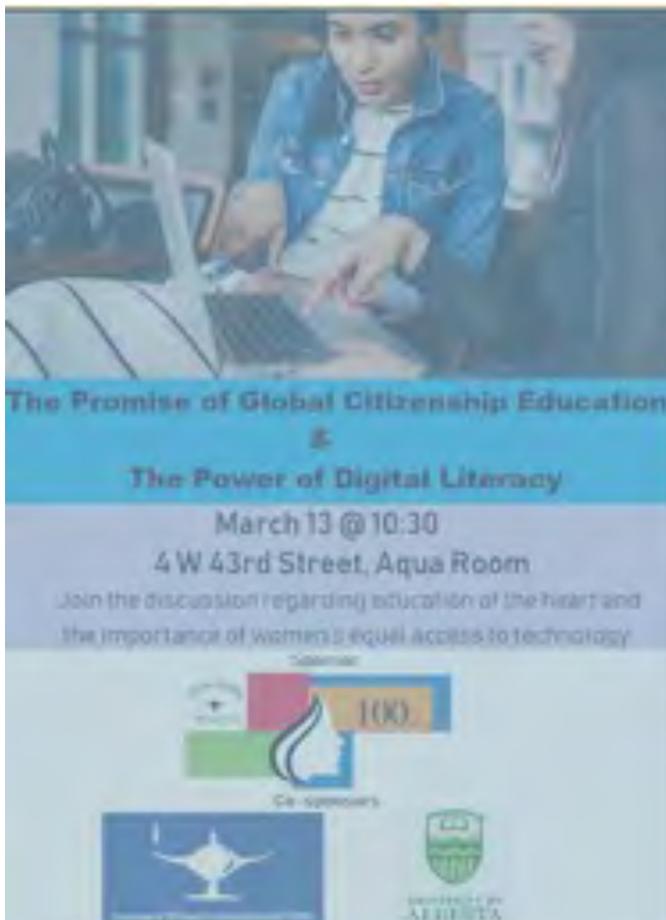
The Minister was personable, well informed, listened intently, and took notes and commented on various points.



## The Promise Of Global Citizenship Education & The Power Of Digital Literacy:

10:30 AM

A Parallel Session Sponsored by CFUW, Graduate Women International and the University of Alberta.



Unfortunately, I was not able to attend this session and had sent my regrets to Joy. However, it was standing room only and had glowing reviews expressed at the WG-USA Lunch I did attend afterwards. Well done!

# Afghan Women and Sustainable Development: Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities

11:30 – 12:45 PM

Co-organized by the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan and the Permanent Mission of Norway



Afghan women have undergone numerous hardships during almost 40 years of armed conflict in Afghanistan. During the Taliban regime, they were deprived of their civil rights, forced to stay at home, removed from their work, and prevented from getting an education. Although there has been tremendous progress across many sectors in the past 18 years, women still face a lot of hardship in Afghanistan. Disproportionate numbers of women and children are killed or

injured in terrorist attacks. They still face social, economic, and cultural barriers which prevent them from achieving their full potential. Nonetheless Afghan women have always been resilient. They have fought to acquire their legitimate rights and to be vocal and active citizens. This has been achieved by the Government of Afghanistan in close cooperation and collaboration with the international community. National laws, policies and strategies have been adopted. Afghanistan's National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF), the Women's Economic Empowerment Programme, National Action Plans, and the UNSC Resolution 1325 are prominent examples to ensure women's social, economic and political rights, including their access to education, health, livelihood and all public services. Achieving the 2030 Agenda for the sustainable development goals is another priority for the Afghan government.



**Mrs. Ghani** spoke as the First Lady of Afghanistan for the fifth year. There has been consistent improvement in the lives of Afghan women. Women walk in the streets with self-confidence, no longer hugging the walls. There has been a growth in Afghan women as advocates of peace after the bloody coup of 1978. But still their lives are threatened. They are patient, courageous and resilient but how much longer can they tolerate such? Women pay a

high price for their insecurity, especially in the remote areas. Every day they fear they will lose a father, a son, a brother by some stray bullet. Yet the possibility of peace now is on everyone's mind. The women have taken an active role, are talking among themselves and at events. They have not stayed silent. No peace will happen at the expense of women. They are logical in their arguments and have behaved with dignity and strength.

**H.E. Adela Raz**, newly appointed Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the UN.



She is the first Afghan female permanent representative to the United Nations and she thanked the international community for its support. In the last 18 years, Afghan women have made great progress in the fields of education, health, justice and government leadership. Afghanistan's women's voices represent 45% of the population, and Afghan youth, 75% of the population. This is a critical time for all including Afghan women who would be the first

affected with changes. We need to echo their voices. We want to end this conflict but at what price. There needs to be equal rights for men and women. It is in our constitution. We need strong voices. We must protect our rights.

**Ms. Marjan Mateen**, Deputy Minister of Education:



Afghan women have used zeal and drive to build their own country and they are determined not to lose what they have today. The time is now. Education remains the key to sustainable peace. In a word, you educate women, you educate a society. The government considers education is the only means to sustainability. Today 3.7 million Afghan children are not in school and 64% of them are girls. The problem is not culture, but lack of infrastructure.

Most men want their daughters to go to school. Sadly, there is a lack of female teachers. Schools in remote areas have trouble accommodating girls because of the challenges of travel to and from. President Ghani has committed to:

- 6000 schools in the next 2 to 3 years
- The majority will be for girls.
- Fifty per cent of the teaching positions are to be allotted to women
- Reform in the curriculum with an emphasis on quality and relevance, and a mandate to be gender responsive
- No gender stereotyping
- Menstrual hygiene management, partnering with UNICEF

In 2018, 26% of the enrollment in higher public education was girls, and in the private, 25%. Security remains the key challenge. If we want to empower Afghan women, we need to bring the jobs to their homes. We need to provide them with what is necessary for them to work in their own homes.

**H.E. Ambassador Ms. Mari Skare**, Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway to the UN.



What is Norway doing to support women's rights in Afghanistan? Norway has a strategic partnership agreement with Afghanistan. Mindsets are changing but it takes time. Norway continues to support Afghanistan financially and through UN Women. Their key priorities are to help with education and health. They are concerned about the gender gap in school. Just as important as the money is the political support through NATO and the UN. There

will not be sustainability without women. We need to include people effected by war, not just as a token, but to be fully engaged. Equal rights for men and women – that is what the UN is all about.

**Anna Karin, UN Women Regional Director:**



We must ensure women are able and equipped to deal equally in the economy. We must continue in this trajectory and improve efforts to go further. We cannot separate women's empowerment and peace. To ensure post conflict recovery and lasting peace, women need to participate. Women take time to deal with water sanitation on an unequal time with men. This takes time from education and paid work. Access to technology has been a real challenge

for female Afghan entrepreneurs. Kabul is securing land for a mini industrial park for jobs for 300 Afghan women. Hopefully this will lead to economic empowerment for some and will help some women survivors of violence as there is also access to medical counseling and support services. Looking ahead, the government hopes to scale up these efforts to help women participate in these markets and increase productivity. It is important that women can place their economic needs on the political agenda. Involving them also in the peace process will have a multiplying effect on the environment and in sustainability.

**Madina Qasimi, Minister Counselor Embassy of Afghanistan to Washington.**



The Minister Counselor spoke briefly about the Dark Phase of Afghanistan, the period of the Taliban but 2001 brought a transformation. The Afghan Constitution now recognizes men and women as equals. Women started to enroll in school. Contemporary times have brought a lot of achievement – major reforms in the justice system and in women's participation in government. We still have a lot of challenges including security and a lack of access to justice, especially in rural areas.

## **Asila Wardak** one of the founders of the Afghan Women's Network



The final speaker, Asila Wardak one of the founders of the Afghan Women's Network, reminded us how important health was to women's rights. What was more dangerous than being a woman in Taliban times, was being a pregnant woman. Men were willing to let women die rather than be seen by a male doctor. There were no women doctors and no women were allowed to study to become doctors. Women now have access to primary health services. Public health services are

increasing. The Minister of Public Health is one of the leading ministers in establishing gender awareness practices. But the following are current issues for women:

- Lack of physical security
- Low status of women
- Poor infrastructure including roads
- Low completion of their education

It is time to mobilize.

Unless there is political will, women will still face a lot of hindrances. We need to place women in positions of leadership.

## WG-USA, CFUW AND MEXICO COLLABORATION MEETING UNITAR Building, New York City

1:30 – 3:00 PM



Members of CFUW, WG-USA, and FEMU met to discuss the possibility of Canada joining WG-USA and FEMU to form a North American Caucus. WG-USA and FEMU have already a MOU. Canada was given an opportunity to learn more about their association and to explore any common interests. I paste below the meeting notes by Elise Russo. Thank you, Elise.

### Participants:

**Federacion Mexicana de Universitarias (FEMU)** – Gloria Ramirez, Glenda Hecksher, Nayana Guerrero

**Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW)** – Grace Hollett, Joy Hurst, Kathryn Wilkinson, Hally Siddons, Barbara DuMoulin, Patti Johnsen, and Lynne Kent

**Women Graduates – USA (WG-USA)** – Fay Weber, Rosette Adera, Sally Chamberlain, Sara Murdock, Kathleen Laurila, Nancy Scheer, Elise Russo

Fay Weber welcomed everyone and shared how WG-USA had crafted a letter in protest of the separation of children from their families at our southern border. FEMU joined us in condemning this practice. We all felt a sense of accomplishment when President Trump rescinded his zero tolerance policy for migrants and asylum seekers. We know, sadly, that the crisis continues.

Fay went on to describe how she, Rosette Adera, and I were so happy to attend and present at FEMU's symposium in November 2018 which was focused precisely on the issue of the plight of women and girls migrating from Central and South America, across Mexico and into the United States.

Glenda Hecksher explained more about the Women's Museum (Museo de las Mujeres) in Mexico City where some symposium presentations were held. This is a glorious place that celebrates the history, gifts, and talents of Mexican women.

Rosette Adera then gave a history of this exciting collaboration:

- Talks about this "North American" collaboration began in Cape Town at the GWI Triennial in 2016
- Topics of mutual interest, which were discussed with representatives from FEMU, CFUW, and WG-USA included: migration, indigenous women, trafficking,

environment issues, and empowerment of rural women. All of these are areas of concern to all three countries.

- Talks continued and eventually FEMU created a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which, initially, included all three countries. Eventually, the draft was simplified, with the help of Lucia Guzman from FEMU, and it was signed by FEMU and WG-USA reps. CFUW chose to wait.
- The ongoing migration crisis has resulted in the current MOU focusing primarily on supporting women moving across our borders.

Grace Hollett explained that CFUW is interested in finding out more about the current MOU and the current and planned activities that FEMU and WG-USA have or will be involved in. Both FEMU and WG-USA representatives at the meeting confirmed that both organizations are looking forward to CFUW's eventual inclusion in the collaboration. Fay Weber talked about "the power of three" and all agreed that a united voice from North America would be very important.

Grace further explained that joining the collaboration would need CFUW Board approval and the final decision would be put to the membership.

Glenda Hecksher's sentiments were agreed to by all in attendance: whether there is a formal MOU or not, the most important issue is the work; that is, the support, protection, and empowerment of women and girls moving across the borders to and from our three countries.

Joy Hurst listed some areas that are of immediate concern such as the common impact that women face as they migrate, trade issues, resettlement concerns, trafficking, how they can become involved in political life and find their voices, and early learning and child care for the thousands of children whose education has been interrupted by their migration.

It was agreed that next steps would be to summarize on-going activities, including who is working on what areas, and contact information for the point people.

## **Women At the Table! Transformative Change – Women Shaping the Agenda of Peace, Transitional Justice and Political Agreements**

**3:00 - 4:15 PM**



Kristin Ástgeirsdóttir



Anne Carr



Vlora Çitaku



Chouchou Namegabe



Dr. Sarah Taylor

### **Participants:**

**Kristin Astgeirsdottir**, Iceland

**Anne Carr**, Northern Ireland

**Vlora Citaku**, Kosovo

**Chouchou Namegabe**, Democratic Republic of Congo

**Dr. Sarah Taylor**, Moderator

According to data from UN Women and the Council on Foreign Relations, women only represent 2% of mediators, 8% of negotiators and 5% of witnesses and signatories in peace processes around the world. For their efforts to be meaningful, women must be included at the table as equal participants, presenting their perspectives, demands, interest and ideas.

### **Questions to be considered:**

- How can we create conditions for women to first shape their own agenda by consolidating their perspectives, demands, interest and ideas into a clear mandate of unified positions?
- How can women deliver as a united front to influence not only peace agreements but transitional justice and political agendas while maintaining the support of a broad coalition of women?

**Iceland** has topped the world's gender economic forum the last ten years by using methods that include lobbying, training, negotiations, affirmative action, projects and research, company and organization quotas, and honouring international obligations.

Women have gone on strike on a few occasions. Indeed Iceland has made incredible progress since 1980 when there was only one woman in Parliament, but there are many challenges ahead. They accept their first task is always to stop and decide together what is it that they actually want to do.

**In Ireland**, women kept the society together for 25 years. So many people suffered – in prison or at home, and just by not knowing if and when a loved one might be killed. The women worked with everyone to ensure they could see their way forward without violence. They eventually became involved in the peace talks but had just 6 weeks to organize. To be involved the women had to agree on three values – Human Rights, Equality and Inclusion. Much consideration had to be given to the question of what a society of peace with itself means. Their slogan was “Wave good-bye to dinosaurs!”

In **Kosovo** 20,000 women were raped between 1988 and 1989 but because of strong women activists the truth has not been buried. Survivors in Kosovo have a voice, have a face. Our speaker was a government minister at the time. It was activists, not politicians that brought the stories of the survivors to her. The survivors of sexual violence demanded justice. They came forward. The perpetrators of these crimes must be brought to justice. There should be no controversy about this and indeed this should be an issue that unites us. The Minister introduced a victim whose story has united Kosovo more than any other in the last 20 years.

**Democratic Republic of Congo** a journalist and activist talked about how rape and violence was used as a method to move people out of villages and take over the land. They used women’s bodies to do so and we heard of horrific stories where after rape women were forced to eat the flesh of their children, where after 5 rapes they were shot in the vagina, or where after rape oil was poured on them and their vaginas were set on fire. When rebels were attacking villages, journalists were courageously reporting the story but it was a challenge because their language did not even have a word for “rape”. They led a campaign to fight silence against rape. Radio was used to communicate. Women in hiding came out to tell their stories and radio sets were distributed so many could hear. Journalists have since testified in international courts. Women continue to call for justice and a legal process to restore the dignity of survivors. There are tragic stories where children of rape victims are not accepted in the community. However, the survivors never give up and want to become economic agents. Women are a huge asset in the whole continent of Africa.

To conclude, this is not about one moment at one peace table but years. Peace requires hope, an implementation plan and the process can really matter.

During the question period that followed, a Serbian woman spoke up to tell a story of a grandmother who had been dreadfully treated by the other side. The Minister from Kosovo spoke back politely but strongly that “there is no moral parity. Let us have no politics.” Feelings are obviously still very strong.

## **CFUW Dinner For CFUW Delegates, Canadian NGOs and International Colleagues**

**7:00 PM**

Once again it was time for CFUW members, GWI friends, and other guests to join for pizza at Patsy’s. Thank you, for your leadership, Grace and Joy, and Brenda for organizing all. Thank you, Sandy Shaw and Barbara Tyner also for sharing some pictures of the evening.



**Thursday, March 14, 2019**

**GWI Breakfast #2**

**8:00 – 9:00 AM**

Once again some of us enjoyed a social time with GWI members from around the world.



Members from The Netherlands, Senegal, Mexico, South Africa, USA, Japan and Canada

## **Social protection systems, and sustainable infrastructures for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and other perspectives from Afghanistan**

**10:00 – 11:30 AM**

Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations

I was very much looking forward to this side event at the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations. It had not been listed in the Side Events Calendar but the Permanent Mission of Afghanistan had kindly invited me. However, at the very last minute it had to be cancelled as not all participants could travel in time.



### **Ministerial Meeting**

**10:30 AM**

This was an interesting session continuing the general discussion on violence against women. The problems outlined were similar in many countries. With few resources Uruguay felt it had had maximum results. However, the problems going forward are shared by many. Each of the countries who spoke agreed there had to be political will going forward. Without it nothing could be achieved.

## **WG-USA Lunch**

**12:30 PM**

WG-USA's hospitality was felt once again. We had appreciated their kind invitation sent out to all CFUW members at the CSW. Zaika Restaurant was convenient and produced a delicious and colourful Indian lunch.



## **Egypt: Responding to Women Refugees from Syria**

**3:00 – 4:15 PM**

Having been involved helping a Syrian refugee family at home I was interested to learn issues faced by them in Egypt.

The National Council of Women is deeply involved in the work in Egypt and reports to the President. In 2018 legislation was put in place to strengthen the work of the NCW to prevent future governments from changing it. There are 27 branches of NCW in Egypt where the rural women can be reached as well. The NCW is concerned with all sorts of violence against women and wants to provide the women with economic tools as well.

Egypt does not have any refugee camps. Instead the refugees are treated as “guests” hosted by communities. They are given accommodation, some vocational training and



taught about their rights including those regarding violence against women. They are also offered psychological training and support services where applicable and are helped generally to re-integrate into society. Egypt looks at having refugees as a positive opportunity and not a burden on it's a society. This policy could be extended to other refugees.

There are 200,000 refugees in Egypt. More than half of them are Syrians and half of them are women. Of these 15,000 are girls between 12 and 15 years of age. These girls need protection against gender-based violence and sexual violence.

In addition Egypt provides safe havens for women survivors of gender based violence. Hubs provide a place to come and talk and to learn new skills. The Ministry supports 6 of these hubs. There are 10 others where health services are available. Child marriages have increased since the war and so the facilities advocate that girls stay in school. Because many of these women are survivors of violence, Egypt has a national strategy regarding early marriage, violence against women and FGM. Coming to another country is just an added burden to so many of these women who had suffered sexual violence and so much more. We need to remember the conflict from which they have come.

During the question period there was a request to hear from refugees in the room. One Biafran refugee who had as a child been given asylum in England spoke up. She said it was unfortunate that so many look down on refugees. She is now a solicitor in London and said being a refugee is not a negative thing that in fact she was proud to be a refugee. Fifty-two years ago it was only the Red Cross that was involved.

The issue of refugees has become politicized. There are still great needs for the UN to address and funding is always an issue. Civil society and human rights activists continue to be needed.

## Women's Shelters: The Heart of Social Protection Systems

CCUN, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

4:30 – 6:00 PM

Violence against women – domestic violence, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, trafficking of women and girls, femicide – is a major problem in every country of the world. In a lot of countries women's shelters do not get the support of local governments they need and public services do not answer the needs of women and children who are victims.



The Global Network of Women's Shelters was founded in 2008 and will be holding its fourth world conference in November 2019. The panelists were members of this organization and others and were from shelters around the globe. We learned of the main problems shelters had and discussed possible solutions.

The report from the MENA area had to be read as the participant could not travel here. Her questions centered around how

to guarantee state obligation and sustainable funding.

In the **African areas** most governments shy away from acknowledging and supporting shelters. The NGOs promote safe spaces. South Africa has done some valuable research that did engage the government. The President called a summit for gender discussion last November, then held a forum, and a council was formed. They have participated in global conferences and have a steering committee that has met once. However, the challenge has become funding.

A speaker from **Estonia** represented Europe. Shelters run by governments may have restrictions. For example, instead of just dealing with women suffering from gender-based violence, the government may want to add children or the elderly. Such loses the victim-centered approach of the shelters. There is a pushback now. There is a pressure to become more neutral. Conservative governments are springing up and they are less interested in supporting shelters for victims of domestic violence. There is pressure to change the Istanbul Convention. There is a decrease in funding. There is a slight increase in the number of shelters in Europe but a reduction in bed spaces. Indeed there are only 30% of the numbers of shelter spaces needed.

The participant from **Mexico** reported that things were very different 25 years ago.

Progress was made but now there is once again an increase in violence against women:

- In **Venezuela**
- In **Paraguay**, a shelter was recently broken into, files were taken, and computers stolen
- In **Mexico**, charity money was taken away and the government has announced it will run the shelters

The femicide numbers are growing. Girls are being trafficked and there is a huge impunity.

To conclude we need to still fight and challenge. What has worked and what has not? We need to raise our voices and use social media to good effect.

In **Australia**, the first shelter was formed in 1974 but they are now seeing an erosion in social services. Shelters have lost funding and some women are placed in homeless shelters - with men. However, they have a rights-based approach and what they attempt to do/offer is:

- Group counseling
- Therapeutic work
- English classes
- Help lines
- Recovery of identity documents
- Accountability for perpetrators

The presenter shared one horrific story of a woman who came as a “wife” to another refugee, thus helping him get into Australia. She worked but never received a paycheck. Instead it was he who got it. She was just a slave. She eventually managed to get to shelter and was protected. The speaker said that once the violence stops and once these women see the support they are getting from the shelter, they survive.

The last speaker was from **Taiwan**. Looking at her graph, 5.5% of the women of Singapore had suffered gender violence but 47% in Bangladesh. She said we need strong laws and to be reinforced by authorities. The bottom line though is that shelters need some funding. We must protect the survivors.

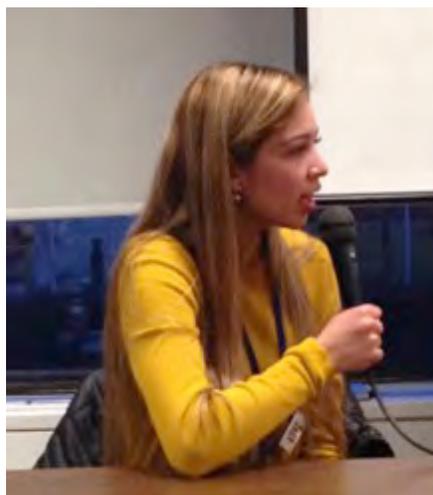
In **Nigeria**, the women are displaced by terrorists or attacked by herdsmen. Their land is taken and their husbands are often killed. Women and children end up in a camp where they are left at the mercy of religious organizations or humanitarians. They need a transition before they go back to the land and try to start up again. They need to be introduced to new skills. Most of the men have been killed and so they are widows. They need to learn new skills that the shelter can help them with and they need to get their children in school.

To conclude:

The shelters know what women need and can provide but the government offer only bureaucrats who know nothing about shelters, women's issues, or training needs. Women can trust women. Many have lost trust in men and in the police who might give away their identity.

## **Refuge Denied: Women in Crisis at the US/Mexico Border**

**CCUN, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**



**6:30 PM**

This was a most informative session.

Ideas are great but now is the time for action. What you see along the border haunts you. It is a structure that is unfair and not congruent with the American dream and the symbolic Statue of Liberty.

The Moderator of the session was a lawyer and had worked on refugees at the southern border for President Obama. She said we probably all want to bear witness to an emergency that continues to unfold. We are looking at people that in another time and place would have received humanitarian assistance.

In the news we need to sort fact from fiction, and fact from editorial opinion.

The refugee issue is one the US has been grappling with for decades.

- In 1986: 1.5 million border apprehensions
- Since 2000, the numbers have been steadily declining
- 2017, 304,000
- 2018, 397,000
- 2019, first 3 months, 268,000

In earlier decades those apprehended were male from Mexico, looking for work.

The picture has changed. In 2018, 40% were women and children. In 2008 women had been only 10%. These women today are fleeing from horror in their countries. Many of their husbands have been killed by gangs and they have children they have to feed. They are desperate for work and security.

Things have changed in the United States. Policy procedures have changed.

Fear tactics have been put into place.

- 2700 minor children were separated from their families
- A few hundred other children were separated.
- Parents and children are being detained for longer periods of time
- Military has been deployed to the border and tear gas has been used. Their presence has been felt

The numbers of admissions tell the story.

- 2015 70,000 admissions
- 2018 110,000 admissions, in recognition of the humanitarian crisis around the world
- 2018 45,000 refugee admissions
- 2019 30,000 refugee admissions

December 2018: The migration protection protocol, “Remain in Mexico” was put into place. It takes 2 to 3 years to process papers. Those that are not accepted are sent back home. This is traumatic for the women who have fled the violence of the gangs. If not accepted, a woman will have to return to what she was so desperate to leave.

Every day 200 to 300 refugee claimants are confirmed. They are sent to the nearest hotels, schools, wherever, and it is the locals who help with clothing, food and support. It was the head of the local El Paso YWCA who spoke of her experiences and the articulate young students from Loretto High School of how they are helping.

The daughter of the local YWCA head spoke of how her family – parents, brother and herself decided not to give Christmas gifts last year. Instead they would help the refugees any way they could.

We learned that in El Salvador, a woman is killed every 18 hours and it is the most dangerous country in which a woman can live. Guatemala ranks #3 and Honduras #7. In these countries very few, perhaps 5%, of the men involved in the gender-based

violence are ever persecuted. Eighty-five per cent of the population is controlled by armed guards. Young boys are getting recruited into the gangs.

The journey to the border is dangerous. One in three women are assaulted. Girls over age 10 are given pregnancy tests by Homeland Security before entry to US. Women even encounter violence at the border and when they are in detention but they do not report it as they do not want to risk any chance they might have for asylum.

This was an inspiring and moving session. One woman rose at one point and said she was from Texas and did not want a wall. Two of the three presenters were children of Mexican refugees and both had their PhD's. They were emotionally upset that they loved their country because it had given their parents and them a chance. Where is that dream going to be now?

**Friday, March 15, 2019**

**GWI Combined Meeting with CFUW, WG-USA and other GWI non-delegates**

**10:00 AM**

This was a very welcome and constructive meeting of GWI members sharing comments on various levels of involvement in the reporting process for NGOs to CSW.

Hazel Bowen, GWI VP Advocacy and Education chaired the session. Louise McLeod, GWI VP Marketing and ECOSOC Committee, WG-USA, gave us some helpful background. I have never been involved in such and have found it quite confusing! The Dutch appear to be very involved and in fact have a Dutch Federation delegate that sits with the Dutch government. Stacy Dry Lara, GWI Executive Director, suggested we should all pull together going forward. For better exposure we should go in as a global voice in order to try to better influence the outcomes. We should take the Agreed Conclusions, distribute it, hammer it out, and keep it going. There was interest and enthusiasm around the table in doing that another year.

Hazel also led the discussion about a possible recommended accommodation for all CSW64 GWI delegates who wished. Costs are understandably an issue.

**Film Screening: Women, Peace and Power – the Stories of Women Peacemakers from Northern Ireland, Afghanistan and Liberia**

**1:15 PM**

*Women, War and Peace* is a five-part series that looks at war through women's eyes. In five films, *Women, War and Peace* travels to Bosnia, Liberia, Afghanistan and Columbia to report the stories of women in hotspots around the world. We see a special perspective of war through the eyes of women featured. *Women, War and Peace* returns to PBS with four feature documentaries airing on **March 25 and 26**. In four films, the series will examine once again the powerful role of women in peace building in Northern Ireland, Egypt, Bangladesh, and Palestine.

As part of the campaign, Peace is Loud created a 25 minute film, "*Women, Peace and Power*" which we saw. This short film follows the stories of women activists, politicians, and ordinary citizens in Northern Ireland, Afghanistan and Liberia as they try to influence peace talks in their countries. The film is powerful and can be used in community showings by referring to [peaceisloud.org](http://peaceisloud.org).



The Side Event was introduced by Minister Charles Flannigan, Minister for Justice and Equality from Ireland and included some of the women featured in the film.

The speaker from Ireland talked about growing up in Northern Ireland and the hate and the dreadful conditions that existed. She was a Protestant and had a Catholic boyfriend but it was very difficult. Once word got out about their relationship someone made arrangements to kill him. It was only that he did not appear on the day in question that he missed being killed. We learned of the fascinating story of their courtship, marriage and settling down and then of repercussions for their children. All to say, this was only an example of one of thousands of such stories. She was very much involved in the Good Friday Agreement and of life after trying to integrate primary schools so that children would not grow up hating each other. There were stories too of taking food to the prisons which housed both factions and there were efforts to help victims of violence – all truly remarkable human stories. The success of the Good Friday Agreement was the power of women working all together, the power of the collective voice.

Remarkable work was done also by the women of Liberia. Their vision, creativity and courage were truly remarkable. One of the women was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. But we must continue to amplify the work the women have done.



In Afghanistan women continue to be sidelined. The speaker from Afghanistan was Mary Akrami whom I had met at CSW before and who joined a small group of us for dinner last summer when she was visiting Ottawa.

Mary is the director of the Afghan Women Skills Development Centre. She represented the Afghan civil society at the 2001 Bonn Conference. In 2003 the Afghan Women Skills Development opened the first women's shelter in Kabul. She is a tireless Human Rights advocate and continues to serve on

the Board of Directors for Afghan Women's Network (AWN). AWN is comprised of 125 women's organizations in Afghanistan that work together to strengthen the integration of women into Afghan society.

Mary confirmed that at the moment there are two big groups behind the door – the US and the Taliban. The Afghan Government has not been invited nor have women to join in any talks. Anything that comes out will be a peace deal, not a peace negotiation. Women want to be part of the peace process. Anything less is not acceptable for peace in Afghanistan, for the country of Afghanistan, or for the women of Afghanistan. Afghan women will not go back. We must not repeat mistakes of the past. It is time for unity and solidarity for Afghan women. We want to go further, not back. But now at the high level, Afghanistan is not there. Do not forget them.

To conclude, we were reminded again that peace is something that we have to fight for every day. "Sustaining peace is not easy."

## The Road to 2020: Accelerating Action on Women, Peace and Security Before the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 1325

UN Women

3:00 – 4:15 PM



The twentieth anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 is fast approaching in 2020. Member States, international organizations and civil society have a unique opportunity to increase momentum and accelerate action towards implementation.

The Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Republic of Namibia spoke. Her government launched its first ever National Action Plan on women, peace and security in April 2019. The plan gives the government tools to take it to the states to implement. Included is training for women.

Countries including Canada, Germany, Namibia and Germany have collaborated to build alliances to implement the woman's agenda. Discussions need to continue. One aim is to close the implementation gap.

Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women reminded us we need to keep the peace where it exists. Implementation in some places is still uncertain. Women are not adequately represented in some talks. If women are not adequately included, women will not get the benefits of the process it is expected to deliver. More investment is needed and more uniformed women in the peacekeeping areas. Women need access to economic recovery, as they are not likely to get their land back if it has been taken away in a war. The children need schools in the communities. The agenda in many countries is not moving at the pace and in the direction the UN would like to see it move. There are still many challenges.

The UN Under-Secretary for Peace Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre LaCroix emphasized the need to have more women involved in the peace processes and in the peacekeeping. We need to work on conflict analysis from a gender perspective. How do we move from an informal participation of women to something more substantial? Some countries are more willing to have women deployed in peacekeeping, the military and in staff offices. We need to follow through. Still in some areas the major challenge is gender-based violence.

What are the ideas going forward? The Central African Republic suggests we need to mobilize together to accelerate the process. In Afghanistan the recent peace talks are deeply concerning. As we are aware, the Afghan government and women have been excluded. Afghan women and girls could once more be left vulnerable. There have been many gains in education, health, and economic development. Women's inclusion is not negotiable. Women need to be engaged in the peace talks and they need to report back. Women empowerment must continue. They must have accountability and access to resources. They need support. Sustained peace is not possible without equal participation of women.

The Executive Director of Isis-WICCW from Africa said that they had seen protracted conflict. Social violence and sexual based violence have not decreased. Women are participating in peace process but not to the extent they should be. The governments are not giving sufficient resources to implement 1325. They need a strategy to deal with the mindset for 1325 and investment should be made at the grass roots level to do this.

A speaker talked of progress in the Marshall Islands. The topic of conflict prevention needs to be addressed. More work must be done on climate change and its implications. Data must be visible and reflect on the women in leadership.

The former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Dialogue, Republic for Kosovo, reminded us not to undermine the Balkans. They are now seen as Europe but they need their voice. The conversation needs to be taken to the local level.

The UK speaker is committed to working to implement 1325 and other resolutions relating to it. National Action Plan progress by each country needs to be accelerated. The UK said it would be particularly focusing on women' participation in the process. Indeed women's voices must be at the heart of the peace processes.

Finally, Michael Callan, Director for Conflict Prevention, Stabilization and Peace building reminded us we needed to move beyond rhetoric. We needed to put the principles we have learned into action. Canada will chair the 2020 Women Peace and Security Network.

## **Breaking Stereotypes: Muslim Women as Agents of Change**

**4:45 – 6:00 PM**



Organized by the Permanent Mission of Pakistan and Co-Sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Turkey.

Some Muslim women have challenged the traditional stereotypes about them. They are making a difference in numerous fields on a daily basis and around the world, not only proving that women have an equal role in Muslim society, but they are also holding up “half the sky”, a phrase directly connected to Afghanistan.

Women have played a special role in society forever but one that has been largely undervalued. Until relatively recently, few cultures have recognized that women have an equal role to men and thus can participate in all areas of society. Despite that, women have sought to overcome the challenges of the constraining effects that social structure and misinterpretation of religious edicts that have had on them.

There is a common misunderstanding that Islam hinders the progress and role of Muslim women. Such a concept is due to unequal power structures and marginalization.

Contrary to common misconceptions, Islam provides the key to women's freedom. It does not forbid women from seeking an education or from working gainfully. On the contrary, Islam encourages women to get an education, to work, to own property, and to engage in business. According to the presenters it places a woman to be an equal in society.

In the presentations we learned how the women were resourceful, creative and dedicated. They are participating in all areas of life and making a difference in their societies – in education, culture, medicine, business, and in key managerial positions. Indeed Muslim women have served as Prime Ministers, Speakers of Parliament, Governors of Central Banks, Judges, Educators, Diplomats and Athletes.



Muslim women continue to challenge the myths of social taboos spun by their traditions of a patriarchal society.

The Ambassador to the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN reminded us that many women have faced challenges and risked danger to serve in key government positions, such as Prime Minister and Ambassador. The Indonesian representative said his country is sharing a teaching of Islam where women are equal but not necessarily the same. Over half the population of Indonesia are women and if they are not treated equally they become a burden. In 2014 17% of those sitting in Parliament were women. The moderator, a PhD Candidate of Political Science at the University of Missouri said that Islam was an enabling agent for women's participation.

The speaker from Iran mentioned the stereotype among women in her country yet they have been able to produce leaders in the fields of education, science and mathematics, business entrepreneurs, a governor and top sports participants.

In Turkey there are also widespread stereotypes but also widespread achievements. Women must ensure they learn so they are not left out. “Better the balance, better the work.

We must tell the world how Muslim women have been overcoming many stereotypes and challenges.

In Qatar women are in leadership roles but they need a lot of networking and support, including the support of the men.

In Uganda young girls must be taught to stand up and speak.

To conclude, men and boys need to be part of the dialogue. Access to education becomes the biggest enabler for girls to dream their dreams and then to achieve them.



**Monday, March 18, 2019**

**The CFUW CSW63 Oral Statement Presented in G.A. Conference Room 2**

It was unfortunate that Joy Hurst or Grace Hollett were not still in New York to deliver the CFUW Oral Statement. In their absence I was asked and happy to do so.



*Picture courtesy of Louise McLeod*

## Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW): UN CSW63 Oral Statement

*Honourable Chair,*

*Excellences,*

*Distinguished Delegates,*

*Ministers, and civil society members,*

*I am speaking today on behalf of the Canadian Federation of University Women. We welcome the opportunity to address this assembly and we acknowledge the privilege that we have in doing so.*

*A digital divide exists in today's society that puts women and girls at a disadvantage. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals call for universal and affordable internet access and yet millions of girls are not online. This is a clear example of gender discrimination, and an infringement on human rights, as everyone should have equal access to education. To achieve gender equality, women and girls need equal access and training to use existing and new forms of technology.*

*Digital platforms have been powerful tools in the Me Too movement and the ability to speak out against gender-based violence. Equal access to innovative technologies is also important for the education of women and girls as teaching materials are increasingly becoming digitized. This impacts women and girls' ability to pursue training, education, and employment. Technology can connect*

women to essential services including physical and mental health services which are all essential determinants in women's empowerment.

Strategies to increase the availability of digital literacy resources for women and girls must be prioritized by member states, in collaboration with civil society. We urge member states to adopt the following recommendations:

- Increase funding to ensure public access to computers and new forms of technology that provide access to necessary services and information; including sexual and reproductive health, and mental and physical health.

- Ensure access to quality public education at all levels, including quality accessible and affordable early learning and childcare services to enable women and girls to have full participation in the use and development of technology.

- Promote the fundamental role of school learning resource centres at all grade levels in fostering and teaching digital literacy skills including digital safety and ethical use of the digital environment.

- Hold the corporate bodies who develop digital platforms accountable for maintaining safe and ethical environments.

- Create digital literacy programs that address the needs of women and girls who are marginalized on the basis of race, sexual orientation, basic literacy, or disability.

*- Develop culturally appropriate digital literacy programs that are specific to indigenous women and girls.*

*- Hold the corporate bodies who develop digital platforms, accountable for maintaining safe and ethical environments.*

*We stay attentive to the outcome of this meeting in generating concerted actions within member states, and we salute the dedication of country representatives, but especially the relentless work of women's organizations across the world in advancing gender rights.*

*Thank you, Madame Chair.*



*Picture courtesy of Louise McLeod*



*Picture courtesy of Louise McLeod*

Maryella (GWI Rep) and I waiting to take our turn to read our respective statements



*Picture courtesy of Louise McLeod*

## Concluding Thoughts



I was delighted to once again attend a CSW - a powerful, demanding, inspiring and humbling experience.

The week whizzes by at a frenetic pace. My notes help to keep me focused and ensure at the end of the week all is not just a blur! They do not speak for CFUW but are rather a reflection of my own understanding of the events as I experienced them. They provide a useful reference for me in the weeks ahead. Meanwhile I am happy to share them with anyone interested.

The CSW63 priority theme, social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of

women and girls, permeated all events I attended. Social protection of women is essential to empower women and to move gender equality forward.

Poverty is a huge issue in our world today and is most often at the expense of women. In addition the gap between rich and poor is growing at an alarming rate. In 2017-2018, a new billionaire was created every two days. Twenty-six individuals now own as much as the entire bottom half of our globe.

How can women from across our globe move ahead against staggering odds? Structures in our society must help them. Many have the burden of care in the family and also do the many menial tasks necessary for mere family survival. How can they free up their time and head space to find alternatives? If work is available outside their home, travel enabling such is often not available, or if so, often not safe. Indeed they find violence on many fronts – their homes, communities and countries. There are few peace deals among warring factions and women are seldom at the table. While culture and tradition can hinder women's efforts, education for all is needed for an enlightened understanding. Social media is making a difference. Many countries have legislation for gender equality in place but governments must realize the importance of investing in such. Policy is one thing but practise and evolution of the policy is another. Women need to break through these many challenges to eventually empower themselves and, often by extension, their daughters.

While one is shaken by the stark realities some women bring to CSW, one is also truly moved and inspired by the stories of others:

- The Liberian woman, exhausted by war who arranged for 2500 Liberian women to meet, many of whom eventually blocked a meeting entrance thus preventing the men from exiting until they had arranged a peace deal;
- The Indian lady who invited Secretary General Guterres to visit her village after giving her one month's notice to organize 20,000 women to be present to speak to him about work;
- The Afghan woman who courageously crosses Taliban lines to organize young women's training sessions in rural areas;
- Bangladeshi girls who resist early marriage by a brilliant social media campaign;
- Ukrainian women who have come to the UN with a plan for peace if anyone will hear them;
- The Argentinian mother who told of never having found her baby after a terrorist kidnapping and who wants to ensure genetic banking is installed around the world to help others;
- Mexican Americans from Texas who in describing the current situation at the border are deeply saddened that those arriving today may never be allowed the dream of the Statue of Liberty she and her parents did;
- The woman from Senegal who tirelessly works across her country to keep girls in school.

While women have made many gains, they need to protect what they have because there is a pushback. Yet there is hope. Many of the NGOs at CSW are making a difference back home. They have incredible courage, vision, drive and resilience. They learn from each other and are grateful to the United Nations for bringing them together and giving them a voice and a chance. The Agreed Conclusions will be important for all going forward.

In a Hallway of the United Nations Building



**IT'S OUR RIGHT!  
AN EQUAL SHARING OF  
UNPAID CARE WORK**

**WOMEN DO  
2.6  
TIMES  
MORE UNPAID  
CARE WORK  
THAN MEN**

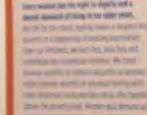
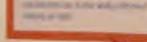
Household and care activities are not the only thing women and girls do. They also often work outside the home for other people or for the state, from casual to paid work to professional careers. They can change public services or address their needs, while also doing up the household chores that often women spend so much of their time doing. And they are often the ones who care for a sick family member, support an elderly parent, or care for a child with a disability. They also often care for a sick family member, support an elderly parent, or care for a child with a disability. They also often care for a sick family member, support an elderly parent, or care for a child with a disability.




**IT'S OUR RIGHT!  
DIGNITY IN OLD AGE**

**10.6  
PERCENTAGE  
POINT  
GLOBAL  
GENDER GAP  
IN PENSION  
ACCESS**

When women are the right to dignity and a secure pension in old age, it is for their own sake. It is for their own sake, and for the sake of their families and communities. It is for their own sake, and for the sake of their families and communities. It is for their own sake, and for the sake of their families and communities.

**IT'S OUR RIGHT!  
COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL  
AND REPRODUCTIVE  
HEALTH CARE**

**208  
MILLION  
WOMEN STILL  
NEED MODERN  
CONTRACEPTIVES**

Health care services should give us everything we need to live our lives to the fullest. It should help us to live our lives to the fullest. It should help us to live our lives to the fullest. It should help us to live our lives to the fullest.




**IT'S OUR RIGHT! A SAFE  
AND DECENT URBAN LIFE**

**108  
WOMEN  
LIVE IN  
SLUMS  
FOR  
EVERY  
100 MEN**

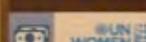
Slums should open a world of opportunities for women to thrive. So why do so many still have to live in slums? Why do so many still have to live in slums? Why do so many still have to live in slums?




**IT'S OUR RIGHT! ADEQUATE  
PAID MATERNITY LEAVE**

**41%  
OF MOTHERS  
GLOBALLY  
HAVE NO  
MATERNITY  
BENEFITS**

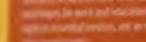
Every woman should have the time and space to care for her child. Every woman should have the time and space to care for her child. Every woman should have the time and space to care for her child.

**IT'S OUR RIGHT!  
MODERN SERVICES FOR  
WATER AND ENERGY**

**80%  
OF HOUSEHOLDS  
WITHOUT  
WATER  
RELY ON  
COLLECTION  
BY WOMEN  
AND GIRLS**

Women and girls should spend less time collecting water and more time working, learning, and playing. Women and girls should spend less time collecting water and more time working, learning, and playing. Women and girls should spend less time collecting water and more time working, learning, and playing.

Hally Siddons  
March 28, 2019