



## Final IFUW Report on the 53rd Session of the Committee on the Status of Women

2-13 March 2009, New York

*By Phyllis Scott, IFUW Vice President and Leader of the IFUW Delegation to CSW 2009*

I have just returned from attending the first week of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York. IFUW had 29 accredited delegates who worked in various ways to make progress on the wording of the Outcome Document on the below themes. (see <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/53sess.htm#themes> )

### **The themes for the 53<sup>rd</sup> session were:**

Priority theme: "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS"

Emerging theme: "The gender perspectives of the financial crisis"

Review theme: "Equal participation of women and men in decision making processes at all levels".

IFUW presented three parallel events, supported a fourth and our affiliate in Finland, with others from the Finnish NGO scene, was involved in a fifth event. Two Board members (Vice Presidents Phyllis Scott and Shirley Randell) participated in the events as did IFUW Past President Mary Purcell and past SWC Convenor Leena Maija Lauren. Conchita Poncini was instrumental in organizing from Geneva a parallel event.

Included at the end of this report is a **summary of comments from 16 of our 27 delegates** who attended the CSW.

The final **Agreed Conclusions 2009** are available on:  
[http://www.ifuw.org/advocacy/docs/csw09\\_agreed\\_conclusions.pdf](http://www.ifuw.org/advocacy/docs/csw09_agreed_conclusions.pdf)

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### **Delegation process**

This year, the Board of Officers of IFUW opened up the process of applying for delegate status to anyone in IFUW who had an interest. There were certain obligations which we included in our initial send out. As delegation Leader (in place of President Louise Croot who could not attend) I worked closely with Réka Fogarasi, a member of the IFUW Headquarters' staff, and thank her very much for her efficient efforts. From an original 43 candidates the delegate list was eventually composed of 29 delegates from 14 countries. (It should be noted that some affiliates were represented by more than one person eg WG USA, Nigeria, Argentina, Bangladesh and Great Britain). I sent three memoranda to all delegates which detailed registration do's and don'ts, notices of where we would meet, directions to off site meeting places, actual roles of delegates, etc. The delegates, especially those there for the first time, found this information useful.

Most of our delegates arrived during the first week but some were there only for the second. Thank you very much to all of you who responded to my request for contributions to this

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report. Your comments are valuable because they are examples of our particular participation and thus meaningful to us as a whole.

### **IFUW Meetings**

At a successful first meeting in the afternoon of March 2, 2009 all delegates present were given two documents, one which contained (among other things) the IFUW policy statements that related to the theme. The Coordinator of the IFUW representatives to the UN in New York, Catherine Moore, produced an excellent package for all delegates with valuable information also. Those who had organized a parallel event had the opportunity to explain about their event. There were introductions all around and a special welcome to our newest affiliate WG USA.

An "open to all meeting" was held each morning in the cafeteria at 8:15. Attendance varied as people came and went according to information they had or wished to hear about. At these meetings, our delegates brought forward comments/discussion on issues heard or discussed and shared prevailing opinions on amendments to wording of the draft Outcome Document. Those whose governments held daily meetings with their NGOs passed suggestions from us to their own government leaders who could in turn, if they agreed, use the ideas in official government debates at business sessions. Opinions could be shared as well at large Coordinating Caucuses of NGOs, held daily, and suggestions for change could reach various groupings of states such as the Group of 77 the largest intergovernmental organization of developing states in the United Nations.

We had one lovely dinner session organized by Loretta James member of the IFUW Representatives in New York and Co Chair of the CSW Planning Committee.

### **Visibility**

IFUW devised a written statement and co-signed 5 other statements. These can be found at <http://www.ifuw.org/advocacy/csw.shtml>.

Titles of parallel events and coordinators of leaders involved in producing the parallel events were:

1. *Equal Opportunities in Decision Making: Attainable at Last?*  
Phyllis Scott, Vice President and IFUW Delegation Leader to CSW 53
2. *Equal Sharing of Family responsibilities including Care giving*  
Catherine Moore, Coordinator of the IFUW New York UN Representatives with assistance of Conchita Poncini, Coordinator of the IFUW Geneva UN Representatives)
3. *Centres for Excellence in Gender and Governance*  
Shirley Randall, IFUW Vice President
4. *International Helvi Siplula Seminar Developing Women Power for Shared Leadership*  
Leena- Maija Lauren, CIR Finland and Finnish Coalition of Women's Organizations.  
IFUW was a cosponsor.
5. *Women Gender Equality and Care in Japan*  
The Japanese Federation of University

The speakers at each of these events were excellent. They were drawn from our own experts and from UN agencies such as UNICEF, ILO, Division for the Advancement for Women, UNIFEM. There were also Mary Purcell, former IFUW President and cofounder of the Working Group on Girls, various Ministers of State and corporate entities such as Goldman Sachs and, not to be forgotten, experts from our own ranks.

### **Outcome Document**

It was felt that the draft Outcome Document prepared by the CSW was lacking in specifics [i.e. not pinpointing women and girls, girls, older women, disabled women, migrant women, etc] and seemed to be lacking in details re: implementation. The document did not convey urgency of action regarding the HIV/AIDs situation. The issue of access to work for women was not adequately expressed. This was important to note as lack of opportunities in the work place leads to women bearing most of the responsibility for domestic and care giving roles. This in turn reduces women's and girls' ability to engage in educational opportunities. The need for measurement of women's unpaid work was noted but specific language ie disaggregation was missing.

### **Women in decision making positions**

Reference to the lack of women in decision making positions was also of great interest and although there were some fine examples of progress in this area, many of the countries of the world need to advance this position. Time and time again in the IFUW session on this subject (the IFUW parallel event entitled Women in decision making; Attainable at Last?) it was mentioned that when men and women work from positions of equality the outcome is superior to one or the other making decisions alone. Also research has shown that companies and countries benefit and make greater progress when both men and women reached decisions together. It seems such a simple answer but is unfortunately complicated by many factors.

Running through all of this is of course, the current financial crisis. Attendees were warned repeatedly that we must not allow gains made to be downgraded. IFUW in its written statement to the CSW last December, emphasized a gender aspect must be noted in all debate.

### **Future themes for the next three years**

2010- Review of the Beijing Platform (twelve critical areas of concern)

2011- Women and Girls in Science and Technical areas (increased opportunities for education, research and employment)

2010- Empowerment of rural women and the relationship to climate change and food insecurity

### **Comments from IFUW delegates**

*“My initial **personal** impressions were not only of the large number of women attending the meeting but also of the dynamic energy of the many young women attending the sessions! Everywhere I saw women with diverse but urgent agendas. There were “diversions” for my eye everywhere! Faces, young and old, experienced and worn, inexperienced and eager, and faces with wrinkles, wrinkles deepened by frequent smiles, or worn by rich life experiences, all*

*reminding me of both the strength and the diversity of the world community that we are so much a part of in a gathering like the CSW."*

*"Why did I come here? to gain a better understanding of issues common to women world wide and to meet and become acquainted with IFUW leaders and their approaches to these global issues. Also to further understand how a NGO has opportunities to present member opinion".*

NGO Orientation: *"At this session, in addition to learning better how "the system works", I learned better where NGO inputs are welcome, i.e., at expert group meetings in Geneva, by signing up for statements prior to CSW2010, by submitting written statements to your own country; and by shadowing the reports of your own country to the Commission".*

Consultation Day March 1: *"I was delighted to see so many young people at this event. Outcome of this day was a document from NGOs to the CSW".*

*"In only one day, I was made aware of several new subjects I had never given thought to: the fact that sexual violence is more prevalent in female-dominated occupations (such as nursing) in some countries and thus women need safe and legal workplace program"*

Giving Thanks: *"I am grateful to have had the opportunity to attend the meetings, if only for one day. It gives one a greater perspective on the world as a whole, on the issues that Women face in other countries every day, and allow us to befriend, network with, socialize with, and be joyful and sad with, all at the same time. We are sisters in every sense of the word".*

CEDAW: *"It took 30 years for CEDAW to be recognized for what it is It has made a difference when considering economics culture religion women and abortion.*

Morning Caucus Report: The CSW working group demanded action, support for GEAR an advanced political agenda, engaging of youth, a mobilization for action at all regions.

Morning Business session on Women and Violence: *"The speaker indicated that one of the most powerful tools to act upon violence is the UN sanction. The big disadvantage is that this tool is not well known. Procedures for using it are not well known among women's organizations".*

Morning Briefing: Introduction of the Integrated Civil Society Integration System helps an organization or individuals in an organization to update information about themselves and about the organization. Organizations can also search for comparable organizations in this system.

The US is Back: Liz Asbug (daughter of Bella): *"We need to realign power; women have a strong voice when they lead. NGO's need to mobilize these strategies to address the unfinished business of Beijing".*

A New Approach for the US: *"There will probably be attempts to dilute the Convention (CEDAW) by writing in "exceptions" (reservations, understandings and declarations) as a condition for allowing ratification to pass, and a strong grassroots effort to prevent such RUDs will be necessary to keep the CEDAW we ratify, robust".*

Security Council Resolution #1820: *"It is not enough to include women in talks and negotiation before, during and after Conflict as mandated by SCR 1325; SCR 1820 demands that the use of sexual violence against women and girls as a tool of war must end."*

Panel on Gender Budgeting: Finland - *"The **key link** is that the ministry responsible for Gender issues is reporting to the ministry of finance. The ministry of finance gives guidelines to sectional ministries. In ministries on social and health issues, on foreign affairs, on education, on trade and industry and on the environment, statistics are broken down by gender."*

Gear Morning Briefing: GEAR Gender Equality Action Campaign. Many comments made about this initiative in many sessions. The General Assembly is proceeding with vote on the subject.

International Women's Day: Address by UN Secretary General - ***"To live free of violence is a right of all women and girls; unequal power relationship between men and women is the critical issue of our time. There is a greater political will to address this issue today than ever before!"***

*"Coalition building for organizations which wish to contribute at the UN level is very important"*

*"Inclusiveness for those often overlooked is important and necessary; groups such as the elderly, the immigrant woman, the caregiver"*

Civil Society Action and Education Coalition: Nigeria - *"School board management committees are represented only by men, not women. Cultural difficulties: women and men cannot meet in the same place and if women CAN attend, they cannot talk"*

Several Members of the Ugandan Parliament (MPs): MP for change in gender equity and empowerment of women (male) – wants to push the issue further in the Ugandan government. Attended CSW to see how NGOs network in both Uganda and the rest of the world.

General Comments *"What was most important to me was the superb support that the British NGOs received from the UK delegation. This was not confined to those in New York but also included those remaining at home. Drafts of the Agreed Conclusions were shared both in hard copy and via email and NGOs views were actually sought"*

*"On several different panels I heard women parliamentarians from Norway, Germany and Canada refer to the importance of woman making use of their Volunteer activities as a training ground to lead them into local political representation. Being involved in making legislation was the means to sharing decision-making"*

*"It was stated that even as women were advancing into legislation they were being slanted more towards the social policy areas. To have more influence they must advance towards the security, budget and foreign policy areas"*

*"Particularly, I enjoyed many events organized by IFUW, Learnt that things are good for now but we have to be better and work hard for the best"*

*"eloquent oratory is not as valuable in this venue as soundly written documentation."*

*"We should go beyond a simple report but urge IFUW for action regarding climate change: give more information to our environmental network .During the seminar the panelists especially the ambassador STAUR urged the NGOs to be present at the negotiations in Copenhagen .The people from Denmark, Finland and Sweden are more involved , so perhaps do alert our NFAs in these countries".*

*"I also attended a drafting meeting in the second week on the final document, where there was a major disagreement on the text between the EU and Syria and Iran. I have not seen this level of disagreement for many years". (I was not actually supposed to be at this meeting which was closed, but I didn't know that when I went in.)"*

*"Great team of IFUW this year 2009. CSW Programme during the first week (March 2nd – March 6th, 2009) was overbooked multiple times with parallel events though".*

*"The overcrowded rooms for the discussions are not a good arena to get important issues to the documents. I wonder if there is another way to process all this"?*

*"One of the most interesting and interactive sessions by UNIFEM was titled "Who answers to women? Gender and accountability". After the presentation of the study and report, the two grand old ladies Hope Miller and Claire Fulcher, arranged an interactive session for the participants. Very good"!*

*"I was pleased to see " item y " of the (Agreed) conclusions speak to access to education and vocational training regarding care giving. As you know in some areas of the world, including the USA, career ladders from homecare worker to professional registered nurse is obtainable and a promise for upward mobility for women and their children".*

*"The opportunity you have gave us allowed us to express shortly in the parallel meeting al "Church Center", about the organization and distribution of the political position in our country, was very rich because we noticed that we will be able to do it better and more fitness in the future".*

*"As an emerging issue the financial crisis had not been anticipated for the 53rd CSW , but during the next few years it will impact seriously all policies and programmes concerning women".*

*"I want to give you credit as an organizer, a friendly organizer. We had a very large delegation (29) .Thanks to the meetings you called, thanks to the morning stand in at the cafeteria, we managed to keep regular contact with the other members, to exchange information to collect at the important events .Even when there were late arrivals, people were included; From my experience , after having participated in many CSW , this delegation work was one of the most successful".*