

## COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

### General Meeting

Tuesday, 16 September 2008, Palais des Nations, Room XXIV

*Summary from Notes submitted by **Conchita Poncini**, Coordinator of IFUW Representatives in Geneva, President of the Geneva NGO Committee on the Status of Women*

## Trends in Women's Human Rights

Earlier this month, Ambassador Erlinda Basilio, Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations in Geneva and Vice President of the Human Rights Council, addressed a meeting of the Geneva NGO Committee on the Status of Women. She started the discussion by confirming that, although the Women's Rights movement has come a long way, there is still a long way to go. She pointed out that the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review is important because it holds States accountable to a wider audience on women's issues.

Ambassador Basilio raised two concerns:

- a. How to increase space in the discussion of human right for women's rights without making the discussion controversial or adversarial
- b. How to harness the many actors involved in women's rights and make a more coherent discussion

She suggested that there are four essential points in women's equality legislation:

1. Education for women (focus must be given to encouraging women at a young age to start education and to give them career options)
2. Access to resources for women
3. Women's participation in decision-making
4. Secure environment for women

She also stressed that is very important to make sure that those States which have not enacted the necessary legislation to ensure women's human rights, do so.

Jane Connors from the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights was also present. She highlighted current issues of focus for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):

- matrimonial property issues
- refugee women & IDP women (internally displaced persons)
- violence against the girl-child

CEDAW has identified gender violence as a Human Rights issue. She pointed out that the Human Rights of Gender Equality is very new. Debate on women's rights is very fragmented (refugees, human trafficking, forced prostitution) and needs greater cohesiveness.

Ms. Krishna Ahojapatel, from the International Center for Health, Migration and Development, also spoke, reporting that there are 200 million people on the move in migration and as refugees, of which 40-50% are women. Women are often stateless because nationality transfers through the husband. Their access to income is very low and their access to resources is almost zero.