



TRIENNIAL REPORT OF IFUW REPRESENTATIVES TO ECOSOC AND ILO IN GENEVA

IFUW Representatives: Conchita Poncini, Coordinator
Katherine Hagen, Marise Paschoud (*resigned December 2006*), Hillevi
Perraudin, Eva Slettenhaar Hansen (*resigned January 2006*)
Ad hoc representatives: Lucy Howe López,
Uschi Kozomara Yao, Arielle Wagenknecht,

The work of the Geneva Team at the United Nations has been intensive over the three-year period since our last report in Perth. It has also increased considerably as a result of the replacement of the Commission on Human Rights by the Human Rights Council (HRC) in June 2006. This report will touch on a few of the highlights:

Changes in the Team

Two of our team members resigned: Marise Paschoud and Eva Hansen. We thank them for their many contributions over the years. We have since welcomed four new members to the team. **Hillevi Perraudin** is following issues related to the Girl Child. She has participated actively in the NGO Working Group on the Girl Child, which organised panels and published a booklet on Girl Child Foeticide and Infanticide, and has represented us at the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the NGO Working Group for the ECE Region. She has also followed the HRC institutional building process to establish a Complaints Procedure. **Lucy Howe Lopez** is following the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the institution building process of the new Expert Advisory Body of the HRC. Both Lucy and **Arielle Wagenknecht** are following gender and health issues at the World Health Organization (WHO), where IFUW has requested accreditation. **Uschi Kozomara Yao** also joined the team to follow the Human Rights Council and specific issues in the ECE. **Griselda Kenyon** has expressed interest in joining the team as an ad hoc member beginning in September to follow disarmament issues and certain themes of the HRC.

Katherine Hagen continues to follow the WTO, WHO and the HRC. **Conchita Poncini** serves as managing editor of the *Geneva Advocacy Notes*. She also continues as Convener of the Working Group on Women in Employment and Economic Development, which is collating data on how unpaid work is being measured in Europe as the first phase of a worldwide project on measuring unpaid work, for presentation to the International Conference of Statistics, as well as a panel at the 2008 Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in NY on *Financing Gender Equality*. In 2007, Conchita organised a panel on *Girls and Boys Building Peace: Best Practices*. IFUW is currently Board Member of the Conference of Non-governmental Organizations in Consultative Relations with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (CONGO). Conchita participated in all CONGO Board meetings in Geneva and Vienna and, together with Griselda Kenyon and Catherine Moore, in New York.

Human Rights Council

The team has followed closely the sessions and working groups involved in the institution building process of the new HRC. The team took an active part among the key NGO and government representatives that lobbied for the integration of women and gender mainstreaming as a standing item on the HRC agenda. We also participated actively in parallel events regarding the new gender architecture and the proposal to have a separate United Nations entity dealing with women's rights and empowerment.

Economic Commission for Europe's (ECE) 60th Anniversary Session

Hillevi participated in her capacity as member of the ECE NGO working group. She helped in the preparation of the statement of the working group to the ECE, *inter alia*, endorsing the organization of a meeting in 2008-2009 to review progress of women and economy in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. This was a follow-up to the successful NGO forum that Marise Paschoud, who was the convener of the working group until 2006, organized at the end of 2005. Conchita Poncini participated as convener of the NGO Working Group on Women in Employment and Economic Development (WGWEED) and made an important intervention, on the critical importance of including women as key in decision-making in energy sustainability and security because of the very strong gender perspective in energy saving and developing and reusing renewable energy. Conchita also drafted and delivered a joint statement on behalf of 14 NGOs who are members of the WGEEED to the Panel on "Economics of Gender".

World Bank

IFUW has been a privileged partner of the World Bank (WB) in Geneva since it re-instated its office in Geneva in 1997. We have always been invited to play an active role during its Development Seminar Series. This year, on 26 April, a seminar was held on the Global Monitoring Report 2007 on Gender and Fragile States, presented by Andrew Morrison who directed the study. IFUW made interventions that will certainly be included in the World Bank's next phase. It is important to note that the Team Coordinator visited the WB in 2000-2001 and one of the items discussed was the lack of an institutional policy on gender mainstreaming. Gender is now institutionalised in the policy and programme of the World Bank.

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

Conchita Poncini and Katherine Hagen regularly represent IFUW at the ILO's annual conferences and meetings. "*Decent Working Time for Women and Men: Balancing Workers' Needs with Business Requirements*" is now an important issue at the ILO. The Team Coordinator will be making a statement to the 2007 annual meeting that Decent Work should ensure women's constitutional rights to participate equally in the decision-making organs of the ILO itself and that any limiting or discriminatory sections of the ILO Constitution should be removed or amended. IFUW has been advocating for this for several years. One can trace the improvements being made by the ILO, e.g. institutionalising gender equality mainstreaming in its programme and budget. The Director-General has moved this agenda forward with a two-prong approach of gender mainstreaming and women specific rights at work and by providing operational programmes in this area.

Future Work

The work of the Geneva Team at the United Nations is expected to increase considerably in the near future, for several reasons:

1. The Universal Periodic Review, an innovative process, being established with other institutional bodies as part of the new Human Rights Council, will increase the number of hours of formal debate that has to be followed very closely.
2. The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) will move from New York to Geneva in 2008. As this treaty body is women's main normative and monitoring framework, it is expected that the IFUW Geneva team will have both a more substantive and more active role coordinating the advocacy groups coming to Geneva that used to go to New York.

3. The current reform efforts of the United Nations call for more coherence among and within UN bodies. This implies more vigilance on our part to ascertain that a holistic approach be taken on gender mainstreaming within the UN.
4. Specialised agencies and programmes of the UN have placed **gender equality** and **gender mainstreaming** as priorities in their Agendas: the ILO Governing Body has approved as an agenda item for the 98th Session in 2009 “Gender Equality at the core of decent work”; the ECE institutionalised the economics of gender in its last annual session held 25-27 April 2007 and is expected to have a preparatory role leading to a fifth world conference on women and other coordinating meetings with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the new entity on women; the WHO has gender as a priority theme in its programme starting from its annual session in May 2007; The World Bank has produced a ***Global Monitoring Report 2007 on Gender and Fragile Countries***, which requires close scrutiny and regular dialogue with the World Bank and relationships with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will have to be strengthened as it has set up a new Gender Unit with a Senior Director.

Proposed Action for IFUW

Because of the multiple roles of women as educators, income earners and entrepreneurs, homemakers and caretakers, and politicians, a gender equality perspective has to be mainstreamed in a holistic manner. IFUW and NFAs can enhance our advocacy role by:

1. Providing IFUW’s permanent representatives with data and information on how unpaid work is being measured and integrated into the macro economic and social policies of their respective countries;
2. Promoting national legislation that gives both women and men equal, non-transferable rights to reconcile family and work responsibilities, as has been the case in the Nordic countries;
3. Participating in the preparation of shadow reports to CEDAW and other treaty bodies as well as to the new institution for Universal Periodic Review within the Human Rights Council;
4. Promoting all the Millennium Development Goals as they relate to women’s rights, their empowerment and their role in eliminating poverty through education, reducing maternal mortality, and fostering sustainable development; and
5. Advocating for productive and active ageing in order to meet the challenges of current demographic trends that penalise women by giving them the added burden of caring for orphaned children, spouses and other dependents without providing for their old-age pensions and social security insurance.

We also urge NFAs and members to read carefully the reports and statements produced by IFUW’s Representatives in Geneva, New York, Paris and Vienna. While the common thread of gender equality runs across them all, each statement is tailored to the specific issue under discussion. NFAs and individual members can provide information on best practices and models that our permanent representatives in turn can transmit in their official statements and interventions at the UN and other specialized agencies.

Conchita Poncini, Coordinator
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