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Introductory Comments to the 88th Council
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Welcome to you all. I am very glad to see everybody here. There was a moment when, just after I was elected, I wondered, as I expect everybody did, whether we would be here! Well, we are and in numbers.

It has been a rather difficult 3 years, but there has been one thing I am very grateful for. That is your support and help. The letters that came in when we asked for decisions and help and information have been wonderful and the friendship and encouragement when I have travelled to see you has been heartwarming. This is what this organisation is supposed to be about, and when this is missing, then we shall collapse, and if I can do anything, it will not be soon.

We have had the task Force meeting, which produced some very good ideas, though getting all the things done, will take some time. The meeting was a wonderful experience of working together and more or less instant understanding among those who took part, which was very heartening to watch.

We have moved office, which involved the staff in an enormous amount of work, from trekking round Geneva, looking at some very depressing accommodation till they found our current very attractive home, and the packing and resettling with fewer people, new arrangements and changed jobs. They have done wonders for us in the time and space available and I should like to thank them very much indeed, for nothing would be left without them. I should particularly like to thank our Secretaries general, firstly Murielle for her years of work with us, with the move at the end of her time and Leigh Bradford Ratteree who has been a wonderful organiser of everything and a huge help to me in difficult times.

However, we too have to face up to our duties. We do have to think carefully about whom we elect to work for us in Committees and to do other jobs. I know we all work voluntarily but one elected Committee member never appeared at all, three of them resigned in the course of the triennium, and several did not perform satisfactorily the work assigned to them. I know that in some cases there were sudden family problems which could not be foreseen, but with the others in some cases work was just left to slide till somebody caught it on top of her own jobs. Those who have done the work have done brilliantly, but if you accept a position in this organisation, you should be prepared to work. I know this sounds schoolmarmy, but it leaves disappointment when things are let go when people are looking for results.

I know you are all wanting to know what has happened with AAUW. Despite efforts by me and a lot of other people, AAUW resolved to remove from their constitution any requirement to be a member of IFUW. Their membership lapses at the end of this year. However, we have a lot of friends in the States. Some of them are here with us and we have hopes of not losing all our American members. You will be hearing about this.

I welcome you to this Council and to the Conference