



Call to Action



We are deeply saddened by the events of recent days. Our hearts and thoughts go out to all those whose lives are touched by the violence, not just in the Middle East, but in India, the Pacific region and many other parts of the world. But words are not enough. As graduate women, IFUW members are among the elite in our countries. Let us use our knowledge, our contacts and our influence to put into action the resolutions that we so enthusiastically adopt at our Conferences. Every national affiliate, every local group, every member has a role to play.

What can we do? To start, we can work for the full implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

In 2004, IFUW passed Women - Essential to Peace, a resolution urging national federations and associations to advocate with their respective governments to support the implementation of Resolution 1325 and the full participation of women in the processes designed to prevent conflict; facilitate an early end to conflict; assist humanitarian operations and reconstruction processes; and protect women and girls from gender-based violence. (See <http://ifuw.org/resolutions/resolutions-peace.htm#2004-9> for full text)

We can also work to implement the IFUW's Resolution on Cultural Diversity and Education, in support of the Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity and the Declaration on a Culture of Peace. National federations and associations are urged to advocate for the adoption of educational policies for primary and secondary students which will give them the opportunity to learn, appreciate and celebrate the richness of cultural diversity and to ensure that school curricula include programmes that are designed to respect differences, promote understanding and counter racism within school communities and multi-cultural societies. (See <http://ifuw.org/resolutions/resolutions-educ.htm#2004-4> for full text)

More than ever, it is a time for IFUW members to work together. The roots of the violence are multi-faceted. The answers do not lie within a single country or a single perspective. We are in a unique position to make a real contribution, both because of our roles within our respective countries and because of the strong ties that unite IFUW members throughout the world.

These are small steps, but they are a beginning. Instead of sending words of sympathy, let us send words of encouragement by sharing with each other the actions being taken to implement these resolutions. IFUW's founding members in 1919 believed in moving from words to action. Let us follow in their steps.

IFUW Board of Officers and Staff

If you need ideas for programmes and activities that meet the energy and time resources your members have available, you can contact the IFUW Status of Women Committee at swc@ifuw.org or the IFUW Resolutions Committee at resolutions@ifuw.org. The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security website also suggests ideas for action - <http://www.peacewomen.org/un/ngo/ngostrat.html>. Another resource is the NGO report *From Local to Global: Making Peace Work for Women* highlighting approaches being taken in different countries - http://www.wilpf.int.ch/publications/1325Five_Year_On.pdf.

International Federation of University Women

Fédération Internationale des Femmes Diplômées des Universités

10, rue du Lac, CH-1207 Geneva, Switzerland; Tel: (+41 22) 731 23 80; Fax: (+41 22) 738 04 40

E-mail: ifuw@ifuw.org Website: <http://www.ifuw.org>

New Human Rights Council

The new Human Rights Council (HRC) was created to replace the Commission on Human Rights, the UN body for the promotion and protection of human rights, which was considered to have lost its credibility over the years. The main objective of this reform was to strengthen the role of the UN's main human rights body to meet new global needs and challenges. As a standing body, the HRC will be able to address promptly urgent human rights violations whenever and wherever they arise.



Preparatory consultations to set the HRC's agenda were held in Geneva. Because "mainstreaming gender equality" had not been mentioned specifically in the General Assembly Resolution that set forth the mandate of the HRC, this issue was hardly mentioned by government delegates. Conchita Poncini, Coordinator of IFUW's Representatives in Geneva, made a statement to the meeting, drawing attention to the fundamental importance of ensuring that gender mainstreaming is integrated process of the HRC from the outset. (see <http://www.ifuw.org/advocacy/reports/2006-hrc-statement1.rtf>)

National federations and associations in one of the 47 member-states on the HRC (see list of countries here: <http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/membership.htm>) are encouraged to lobby their governments to ensure that integrating women's rights and mainstreaming the right to gender equality become regular items on the HRC agenda

The first full session of the new Council was held in Geneva from 19-30 June 2006. Many speakers noted the importance of women's rights and the empowerment of women. Issues raised related to women's rights included ending violence against women, the elimination of discrimination against women, the involvement of women in decision-making, equal access to healthcare, trafficking, and the right to education. At the initiative of Switzerland's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Micheline Calmy-Rey, the women Ministers present at the HRC signed a declaration on the representation of women in political decision-making.



First Session of the HRC Council © UN/DPI Photo

Virtually every speaker made mention of the special and fundamental role of NGOs. NGOs and human right defenders are considered important partners, the ones who make the Council's work a reality.

During the Session, four issues emerged as priorities: the importance of the HRC and its duty to become the world's foremost human rights body without falling into the errors of the old Commission on Human Rights; the need to reaffirm the indivisibility, universality and interdependence of all human rights; discrimination against women; and national efforts to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights.

The HRC adopted The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Work on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples began in 1985 and has taken 21 years of discussion, revision and compromise to reach this stage. The next step will be the recommendation of the Declaration to the UN General Assembly for its adoption. National federations and associations in countries concerned with indigenous peoples are encouraged to lobby their government to implement the Declaration by:

- Implementing Resolution 4, on "Cultural Diversity and Education" (<http://www.ifuw.org/ifuw2004/28thresolutions.pdf>), which was agreed upon by the General Assembly at the IFUW Conference, Perth, 2004.
- Taking into consideration indigenous women's issues, including the right to land, in all recommendations put forward to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

Based on reports by Conchita Poncini and Hillevi Perraudin

For their full reports, please see -

<http://www.ifuw.org/advocacy/reports/2006-hrc-1.rtf>

<http://www.ifuw.org/advocacy/reports/2006-hrc-1-indigenous-rights.rtf>

<http://www.ifuw.org/advocacy/reports/2006-hrc-gendermainstreaming.rtf>

Toward Sustainable Cities

The Third Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF3) met in Vancouver, Canada, from 19-23 June 2006. With about 10,000 participants from over 100 countries, the Forum sought to drive forward the international urban agenda in a world of rapidly growing cities. The theme of the Forum was "Sustainable Cities – Turning Ideas into Action". Participants from all walks of life met to discuss a range of issues, from security of land tenure, women's right to inheritance, women's role in development, to removal of obstacles for micro credit.

IFUW Vice-President, Phyllis Scott, represented the International Federation. Twenty-five CFUW/IFUW members also attended the different events. Among these were sessions on women's grass-roots activities, racism, right to the city, slums, and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Throughout the Forum, women-specific issues were very much in the spotlight and it was clear that women did not intend to be anything less than equal partners in sustainability.

UNESCO and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO presented a booth in the Forum Exhibit Hall, which CFUW/IFUW members helped to staff. As an added bonus, IFUW was able to display some of its own material. This was useful in that it allowed members to publicize IFUW, while at the same time learning about UNESCO's many programmes.



Phyllis Scott (right) with Jan Peterson of the Huairou Commission, a worldwide network of women working to strengthen and create sustainable communities

Some of the cross-cutting issues raised were the need for inclusive partnerships, transparency and accountability and the need for greater attention to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in cities, particularly Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability.

It is clear that education is a critical component of building sustainable cities. According to UNESCO, "educational content and methods must be oriented more clearly towards the goals of sustainable development. From nursery school to university curricula must be revised to include explicitly the study and understanding of problems linked to social, economic and environmental and cultural sustainability while emphasizing trans disciplinary approaches".

Several emerging issues were identified during the week, among them the need for: building coalitions that address the need of

the urban poor; increasing financial resources for sustainable infrastructure; shifting from reliance on international development finance to local capital markets; addressing the gap between governments' commitments and actions to meet the MDGs in cities and adopting strategies that recognize the specific needs of women, youth and people with development.

The daily bulletins of WUF3, as well as a summary of activities, are available on the website of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (<http://www.iisd.ca/ymb/wuf3/>). The Report of the Forum is also available online in PDF format (http://www.wuf3-fum3.ca/pdf_other/un_report_en.pdf).

The Report summarizes the issues and contains many activities that IFUW members the world over could feasibly carry out. In fact, IFUW and our members are already involved in many of these issues and activities.

Based on a report from Phyllis Scott for her full report, see <http://www.ifuw.org/advocacy/reports/2006-wuf3report.doc>

New Associations forming in Rwanda and Liberia



Founding meeting of the new association in Rwanda

Fifty women graduates from the major academic institutions in Rwanda met recently at the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology (KIST) and decided unanimously to create the Rwanda Association of University Women (RAUW).

The meeting took the form of a workshop on gender-based violence as well as an explanation of the purpose and objectives of the proposed association. Professor Pamela Abbott, Vice Rector Academic, KIST chaired the meeting and emphasised the importance of both networking for academic women and the reduction of gender-based violence (GBV) in Rwanda. Only 27 percent of women are in tertiary education and very few are in management in higher education. Jolly Rubagiza, Lecturer at the Kigali Institute of Education, spoke of the potential for academic women to be role models throughout the community. "Academic women could be role models for women and girls in every institution, in their homes and their communities, encouraging them to work hard and focus on their studies" Ms Rubagiza said.

Ms Josephine Odera, Regional Director, UNIFEM defined gender-based violence as a world wide issue, particularly affecting women, and said that graduate women could give all women a voice on this issue and expand their possibilities to engage in national debate. Academic women could support other men and women, boys and girls through research and advocacy targeted against violence,. She mentioned the need for support systems to encourage women to talk about their experiences, especially of violence that occurred during the genocide.



Left to right: Oyinkansola Bankole & Phanta Sackor

Assisting the group in its formation is Dr Shirley Randell, Senior Adviser in Gender and Governance for the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) and Convener of the IFUW Projects Committee.

A new initiative is also underway in Liberia, the country which just elected the first African woman president. Oyinkansola Bankole (IFUW International Member from Nigeria), inspired by her experience as an observer at the IFUW Board and Committee Meetings in March 2006, decided to work with women graduates in Monrovia to start a national association. The group already has more than twenty members and is cooperating with a local information technology company to create an on-line job bank for those seeking employment. It has been a good way for the group to meet prospective members. Oyin and Phanta Sackor, interim president, have also made presentations to attract members from the University of Liberia.

Members interested in contacting the groups in Rwanda and Liberia should write to IFUW Headquarters – ifuw@ifuw.org.

News from Headquarters

Anamaria Vere (Colombian/American) rejoined the IFUW staff on 1 July as the new Programme Officer. Her primary focus will be the website and communication. She was previously part of the IFUW web team from 1999-2001 and helped with the Conference in Ottawa in 2001. She will be a valuable addition.