

**POLICY AND ACTION DOCUMENT****Purpose**

The International Federation of University Women (IFUW) is committed to working for:

- The development of lifelong education for women and girls
- Promotion of the status of women and girls and their knowledge and skills in leadership and decision-making, in public and private arenas, locally, nationally, regionally and world-wide
- International co-operation, peace and full human rights for all, irrespective of their race, nationality, religion political opinion or sexual orientation

**How do we do this?**

IFUW

- Offers an interdisciplinary approach to issues
- Enables graduate women to use their expertise to effect at all levels
- Represents and advocates the views of graduate women in international for a
- Promotes networking, co-operation support and understanding among graduate women

**Action**

National Federations and Associations (NFAs) make proposals based on their work and experience, which are discussed at international meetings and conferences. Final wordings are decided and voted on by delegates from NFAs at the triennial international conferences of IFUW. If agreed these are resolutions which define the policy of IFUW.

NFAs set up projects or lobby their governments to take action which will achieve the results desired in the resolutions. They are requested to report successful strategies and results to IFUW.

If international action is required, the IFUW Board writes to the heads of international organizations putting our case for action by them.

The representatives of IFUW at international organizations such as the United Nations lobby delegates to try and influence governments; and join with representatives of other international NGOs to campaign on issues.

IFUW joins other international NGOs to set up joint projects and funding initiatives to assist women and girls in need.

**Other Activities designed to help implement IFUW policies:**

- IFUW has funds designated to provide scholarships, assist projects and give emergency help to university women.
- National Federations and Associations carry out programmes designed by them to fulfil these aims.

**Full details of all IFUW resolutions and information about IFUW activities are available on the IFUW website [www.ifuw.org](http://www.ifuw.org) or from the IFUW headquarters.**

## **IFUW POLICY AS EXPRESSED IN RESOLUTIONS. (SUMMARISED)**

### **Status of Women. Equality and Work**

- Promote the self esteem of women and girls
- Enable the combination of work and family life
- Advance the status of women in work in national and international public service and in public appointments so that they may work at decision-making levels on an equal basis with men.
- Publicise posts and support women in them.
- Encourage governments to quantify the value of women's unpaid work.
- Support equal rights in matrimonial property, nationality and legal and economic status.

### **Education**

Support the right to quality education and educational opportunities for women of all ages and in special circumstances such as prison.

- in particular to overcome illiteracy.
- by promoting languages,
- leadership, technical, vocational and agricultural training;

so that a variety of careers is open to them, including, in Higher Education and so that they have economic independence and a concern for human values and citizenship.

Encourage educational authorities to include a gender perspective and gender studies in the curriculum. and ensure educational opportunities for adolescent mothers.

### **International Co-operation**

Support and monitor the work of the United Nations and its agencies in enhancing the Status of Women and encourage Governments and NGOs to implement the documents and treaties drawn up by conferences.

Encourage NFAs and other NGOs to lobby Governments on women's issues.

IFUW is an active partner with other international women's organisations, in Project Five-0 which promotes non-formal education for women and girls.

### **Education for International Understanding**

IFUW promotes international understanding by:

Programmes

- education for peace,
- conflict resolution,
- the promotion of the study of language and culture
- supporting international professional exchanges

holding and promoting international meetings and contacts.

### **Human Rights**

- Support legislative means at all levels to promote Human Rights and calls on governments and NFAs to work for the abolition of the slave trade, trafficking, violence against women in families, in schools, in the workplace and against the disadvantaged.
- IFUW works to help refugees, especially graduate women refugees and supports their human rights.
- Call on governments and NFAs to support the rights and well-being of the child, especially the girl-child, particularly in situations of armed conflict, child soldiers, trafficking, child pornography and the exploitation of child labour.

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**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](mailto:ifuw@ifuw.org) Website: <http://www.ifuw.org>

## **Population and Health**

- Call on NFAs to further the dissemination of information about population growth and urge Governments and NFAs to support UN and National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care programmes.
- Support Health promotion programmes including alcohol and tobacco information. especially with adolescents.
- Encourage NFAs to discuss the problems of human cloning and the advances of medical applications of human genetics research.

## **Environment and Quality of Life**

Out of concern about damage to the environment in many areas, call on governments for action and to include women in their decision-making processes. Areas of concern include: nuclear weapon tests, energy conservation, hazardous household waste, desertification. sustainable forestry, wilderness areas. marine environment, and the ozone layer.

- Quality of life: encourage NFAs to promote programmes to encourage governments to alleviate National Debt, promote equitable international marketing policies, develop development indicators and national shelter strategies.

## **Peace**

- Support disarmament, especially the abolition of nuclear arms and their testing, the banning of landmines, the reduction of military budgets and the peacekeeping role of the UN. Support an international code of conduct on arms transfers.
- Avoid the politicisation of proceedings at international conferences, prioritise the peaceful resolution of political conflict and peace education.
- Encourage the participation of women in the peacemaking process and highlight the problems of violence against women and rape and enforced pregnancy as strategies of war.

## HOW TO MAKE OUR VOICES HEARD

IFUW, its Board and members and NFAs often receive requests to comment about various kinds of injustices throughout the world. Much as we deplore what is happening, we must be careful about how we take action and whom we claim to represent. We must also examine the facts in each case, as it can be detrimental to our position if we base our opinion upon incorrect information.

If you as an individual wish to make a point to those in authority, you have a perfect right to do so, provided that you do not claim to be speaking for IFUW or for your NFA without following proper procedures. You also need to be aware of the legal constraints of taking political action in both your own country, and in the country in which you wish to take action.

### **IFUW Action**

Existing policies and positions on issues of both IFUW and your NFA should first be examined, as basing your testimony upon existing policy is necessary. If you wish IFUW to take action, it must be an issue of international concern, about which IFUW has policy and about which it is possible to protest to someone other than a national government; e.g. the UN Secretary General, the head of an international organisation dealing with human rights, disarmament, refugees, an international commercial company or another NGO. The request for action needs to be channelled through the Board and written by the President. This is a procedure that requires some time to be properly prepared and approved by the whole Board, but with Policy Resolutions that have already been put in place by IFUW Council and conference delegates, the approval time is shortened.

IFUW occasionally puts out alerts to stimulate NFAs to write to their own governments. For instance, in recent years IFUW has called for NFA actions in regard to appointment of women judges to the International Criminal Court and to draw attention to the lack of national government action in various fields, especially the abuse of women's rights.

### **NFA Action**

If you wish your NFA to take action it must be part of the policy of your NFA, as expressed in your resolutions or previous actions. You will need to persuade the President or other members of your board to take action, using the established structure and procedures of your NFA. If an NFA in another country has taken some action with which you either agree or disagree, contact them directly with your opinion on the issue.

### **Whom do we contact?**

If you want action about something that is happening in a country other than your own, contact your own foreign ministry or the nearest embassy of the country about which you have a complaint. This may be in your national capital or in a nearby country. They may well have existing policy on the issue and may already be taking some action. You can also make known your opinion through other NGOs. Many NGOs campaign on the net asking for signatures to petitions. You can do this, but be careful about which campaigns you support and the credentials of the sponsoring organisation as they can have a variety of agendas.

### **Back-up**

Many of the problems which inspire protest are things which have been discussed at the United Nations and about which there are treaties and conventions, especially in the fields of human rights and women. However, these only apply to states which are party to these treaties, so if you want to complain about discrimination against women or torture, it will not be useful to use the text of a treaty in a country which is not a party to it. There are other international agreements as well, such as European or other regional legislation. Information and texts are on the UN website or on the websites of organisations who specialise in the problem.

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