

The UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York was rather a mess this year. This was mainly due to the organisation by the parties responsible who didn't seem to have allowed for all the problems involved. First, the UN building was being renovated, so there was a shortage of room space. Many meetings had to be housed in a temporary building which was small, so access was restricted by ticket, which meant that many people could not attend meetings of interest. Second, there were far more NGO attendees than usual, since the meeting was about the 15 years since the Beijing conference, more than twice as many. This meant long queues to register and very crowded meetings. The subject matter, the whole of the Platform for Action from Beijing meant that all the issues could not be covered and people who had particular interests could not pursue them properly. The Board of CSW were afraid that if there were extensive debate some of the issues might go backward if conclusions were agreed which were not as far reaching as the Beijing ones. They therefore decided that the outcome document of the meeting would be a declaration of support for the PFA and encouragement to press for further action. No discussion of this was allowed in a plenary meeting, which annoyed everybody.

That said, there was a lot going on and I met many interesting people, especially those whose first time it was and who were interested in the back history of women's activities in the UN.

I attended a meeting on protection in armed conflict. There is a mechanism and a working group looking at the situation of child soldiers. It is not so easy to have a mechanism for women, since resolution 1325 is vaguer on this point. It was suggested to me by a friend in the secretariat that women and the resolutions about them may be absorbed into the Peacekeeping, for good or ill is not clear, but at least there is activity.

The plenary meeting celebrating International Women's Day was most enjoyable with the head of the Beijing Conference, Gertrude Mongella and Patricia Licuanan, who was on the board, discussing the Conference and what had happened since.

There was concern about the Millennium Development Goals which did not build on the PFA, defined gender equality narrowly (violence is not included) so that the targets were not reached. The PFA is much wider and more beneficial as a document for women than the MDGs. Governments lack the will to integrate either the PFA or the MDGs into domestic legislation, though this could be done through CEDAW. The question was asked as to how to improve the accountability of States!

There were several meetings about the progress of the reorganised unit in the secretariat of the UN (GEAR). Mainly, though we have to wait for the appointment of an Under-Secretary General and activity at the General Assembly.

As a result of the decision to have a short declaration about there were a lot of resolutions since everyone with a cause wanted it to be discussed. The one on maternal mortality ran to a large number of pages and questions about abortion which took up a lot of time. All the documentation on the meeting is on the UN DAW website.

Griselda Kenyon