

Newsletter No. 72 / May 2021



Contents

- 02 President's Message
- 03 Report on UN CSW65
- 06 Report on ICW parallel event during UN CSW65

- 08 Reports from UN Representatives
- 15 Reports from the Standing Committees
- 21 News from Member Councils (NCWs)
- 35 Condolences & Upcoming Events

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President's Message



Dear ICW sisters and friends,

Greetings! We all know what an enormous tragedy COVID-19 has become--so many deaths, so much misery. The magnitude and impact are almost unbelievable.

One of these particular concerns to our organization has been the proliferation of violence against women and girls, and from a broader perspective, the expansion of various forms of gender inequality. For those of us who believe in equality and fair treatment, it is essential that we redouble our efforts to inform others of just what is happening around us and to find effective ways to combat the inhumane retreat brought on by the disease. We will be strong and meet the challenge with all the resolve we can muster. As such, the challenge is both enormous and entirely worthy.

This year, due to the pandemic, the 65th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) took place in a virtual format. The session was conducted from March 15 to March 26. During CSW65, ICW organized two virtual events: a side event, "Women's & Children's Health and Well-Being in the Context of COVID-19", on March 16 and a parallel event, "Violence Against Women and Girls and COVID-19: Policies/Practices to Build Back Better", on March 18.

Despite some difficulties for us to conduct virtual events as the system was new, I am pleased to say that our events went extremely well. We were fortunate indeed to have excellent speakers and other experts who could share such useful information on the subjects. As a result, we could produce solid ideas and formulate concrete strategies on how to improve women's & children's health and move toward elimination of violence against women and girls. I have great respect and appreciation for those who made these events so successful.

The ICW board meeting was also held virtually on April 20. At the meeting, the board discussed the current ICW agenda including input for the ICW General Assembly (GA) in 2022. NCW France reported progress in preparation for the next GA. The board confirmed the dates May 16 to 22, 2022 for the 36th GA. in Avignon, France.

I so strongly hope that we will be able to meet in person next year. It would be so very nice to see everyone and to share time and ideas together.



Jungsook Kim (Ed.D),
President of ICW-CIF

Report on UN CSW65



The 65th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) took place from 15 to 26 March 2021. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, CSW65 was held in a hybrid format with mostly virtual meetings. The priority theme was “Women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”.

< Consultation Day >

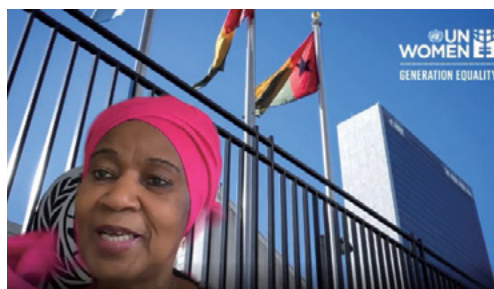
This year, each of the four regions held separate Consultation Day events for the UN CSW65 at hours convenient for the participants in their regions. NGO CSW/NY Consultation Day was held on 14 April 2021, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. (EST). Houry Geudelekian, Chair at NGO Committee on the Status of Women (NGO CSW/NY), welcomed the participants to the virtual consultation event and happily announced that there were more than 25,000 registrants for the virtual NGO/CSW 65 Forum.



The two-hour program started with an indigenous ritual and prayer for an end to all forms of inequalities and violence against women and girls. A conversation between Ambassador Mher Margaryan from Armenia, Chair of United Nations CSW65, and Phumzile Mlambo Ngucka, Executive Director of UN Women followed.

Ambassador Margaryan pointed out that the COVID pandemic resulted in aggravated suffering for women and girls living in conflict areas and fragile settings. He stressed that consolidation of global support and collaboration are crucial for protecting women in these settings because women are at increased risks of inequalities and violence with reduced access to aid and services. He concluded that recent outbreaks of violence have demonstrated that the UN needs to be more well-equipped with sufficient resources in order to step up its efforts to detect early warning signs and assess the risks.

Phumzile Mlambo Ngucka, Executive Director of UN Women, noted that while the pandemic severely impacted women's lives -- 2/3 of jobs lost were by women, violence against women and girls (VAWG) increased, women faced the increased burden of unpaid care, -- a majority of the response and recovery teams around the world did not include women. Phumzile further stressed the importance for CSW to be supported by other mechanisms because the impact of Intergovernmental Organizations is limited. Therefore, UN Women expanded the CSW space this year to include the private sector with the goal to ensure that anyone has the ability to take this action up at home. She also introduced the aim of the "intergenerational equality" campaign, to bring young people into the conversation and to connect them with governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector, so that the recommendations from CSW will lead to national actions to implement them.



*Phumzile Mlambo Ngucka,
Executive Director of UN Women*

The program closed with speakers reiterating the importance for Member States to produce an outcome document with concrete and effective recommendations and urging civil society to make sure that their voices are heard by their governments during the negotiations so that member states will make bold decisions to take the steps needed to promote progress in women's leadership, e.g., adopt quotas, targets and mandates.

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The next panel introduced the Generation Equality Forum (GEF). Leaders of this program spoke about Generation Equality Forum's objective to mobilize young women to translate generational equality into action and change. Meanwhile, the young panelists spoke of their desire to be at the table to create change that will impact the world in which they live.

The virtual Consultation Day program ended with the UN orchestra performing "Nimble Feet," by Florence Price, an African American women composer.

< Opening session of the CSW65 >

Under extraordinary circumstances ushered in by the coronavirus, the CSW65 had a hybrid format including a limited number of in-person formal meeting and informal virtual meetings. The opening session on March 15 was held as a formal in person meeting with limited number of participants.

H.E. Mr. Mher Margaryan, Chair of UN CSW65, called to order the 65th CSW, adopted the provisional agenda, and approved the organization of work as provided. He spoke on the importance of women's equal access to and full participation in all aspects of public life as well as the elimination of violence for achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. He also emphasized that CSW65 should provide an opportunity to come up with strong action-oriented policy recommendations and ensure that we build back better towards a future that is more equal, resilient and sustainable.



*Mr. Mher Margaryan,
Chair of UN CSW65*

In his opening remarks for CSW65, UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, said that “The COVID-19 is a crisis with a woman’s face.” He noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated entrenched discrimination against women and girls.

He stressed the effectiveness of women’s participation in decision-making process in order to overcome global crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic. He also stated that “Women’s equal participation is the game-changer we need. Decades of evidence show that women’s participation enhances economic results, prompts greater investment in social protection, leads to more sustainable peace and advances climate action.”

Antonio Guterres pointed out that women are largely excluded from the exercise of the highest responsibility. Women only account for a quarter of parliamentarian, one third of local government members, and one-fifth of cabinet ministers worldwide. Only 22 countries are headed by a woman Head of State or Government.

He reported that the United Nations has also positioned women at the heart of its initiative to combat COVID-19 and to achieve a recovery. Many are aware that a champion for women’s rights, Antonio Guterres has supported women’s leadership within the UN, with women holding 50 percent of the leadership positions within the UN.



*Mr. Antonio Guterres,
UN Secretary General*

Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo Ngucka, in her speech, mentioned that neither the pandemic nor the financial crisis deters us from making growth in the representation of women. She highlighted that “Representation of women in decision making is the only way to build back better in a gender-responsive matter, in an equitable manner and in a greener manner.”

Ms. Mlambo Ngucka urged delegates to take action to include young women in decision-making, especially those who are affected by age barriers when it comes to entry into public office. She said that we must make space for them and all women so they can take their rightful places. She closed her speech saying that “It is my heartfelt hope that in this year, which is also my last year at UN Women, we can witness bold and strong moves that will propel us in a much stronger way to gender equality and will end the discrimination against women and girls and empower all of us.”

Report on ICW parallel event during UN CSW65

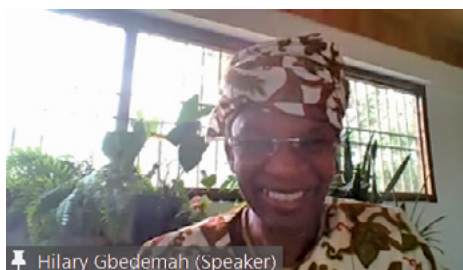
During the UN CSW65, ICW-CIF organized a virtual parallel event, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and COVID-19: Policies/Practices to Build Back Better, on March 18, 2021 at 3:30 a.m. (EST).

In her opening speech, ICW-CIF President, **Dr. Jungsook Kim** remarked that in addition to a health pandemic, COVID-19 increased the inequalities faced by women and girls and aggravated all forms of violence against women, in particular, intimate partner violence. Dr. Kim noted that post recovery programs present a good opportunity for countries to implement policies and practices to eliminate gender-based violence and achieve gender equality. She then turned the floor to the moderator, ICW-CIF Vice-president Ms. Linda Liu.

Dr. Dubravka Simonovic, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, stated that the various socio-economic stresses created by the pandemic and government lockdown measures to control the spread of the virus resulted in trapping many women at home with their abusers and made it more difficult for them to seek help or escape the abuse. She expounded on the effectiveness of the UN's role to raise world awareness of VAWG and to urge Member States to continue providing protection and medical services to victims of VAWG during the pandemic.



Dr. Dubravka Simonovic



Hilary Gbedemah (Speaker)

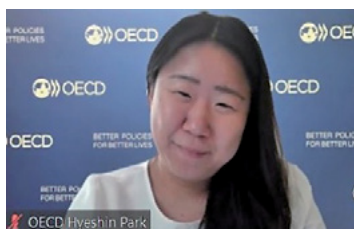
Ms. Hilary Gbedemah, a current member and immediate past Chair of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee, further added that lockdown measures led to dire impacts on the livelihood of women, especially those who worked in the informal sector. She further noted the obligation of state parties to CEDAW to ensure that measures taken

to address COVID pandemic do not discriminate against women, protect women from gender-based violence, guarantee their socio-economic empowerment and include women's participation in policy and decision making in gender response and recovery efforts.

Ms. Diana Jamina Arango, Senior Gender-Based Violence and Development Specialist in World Bank, communicated the World Bank's commitment to end VAWG by incorporating this goal in their programs with UN agencies, governments, and private sectors. Some of the examples she provided include: funding media campaigns on the radio and television to heighten awareness on the prevention of VAWG and to inform women that protections services for victims of VAWG would not stop during the pandemic and funding the construction of hospitals and medical services for victims of VAWG.

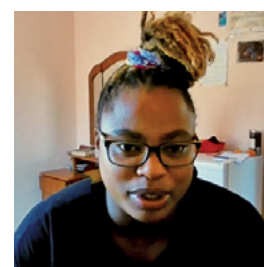


Ms. Diana Jamina Arango



Ms. Hyeshin Park, the Gender Programme Co-ordinator at the OECD Development Centre, spoke about one of the OECD's actions to work for gender equality through collecting data to measure the Social Institution and Gender Index. This index evaluates discriminations against women in countries around the world to enhance understanding of the root causes of gender inequality and VAWG. She identified certain socio-cultural masculinity norms as being restrictive because they create power imbalance between males and females, undermine gender equality, and lead to violence against women and girls.

A survivor turned activist committed to help survivors of the sex-trade, **Ms. Grizelda Grootbloom** spoke about being raped at a young age to being forced into sex trafficking and drug abuse at 18 years and finally to exiting successfully from the violence after 12 long years. Explaining that it was very hard to get help through the social system when one had a criminal record, she had to find ways to pay for her own medical care. She became acquainted with organizations like Embrace Dignity, which helped her and gave her the opportunity to write her book "Exit." This book has allowed her to work as a survivor activist and try to help girls escape from sex slavery, trafficking and violence.



Ms. Grizelda Grootbloom



Dr. Mohinder Watson

Dr. Mohinder Watson, ICW-CIF main representative to UN Geneva, spoke on forced marriage and honor-based violence (HBV) as these are often hidden and largely under-reported but have devastating physical and psychological impacts on women and girls. The triggers for HBV include refusing an arranged marriage, pre-marital or extramarital relationships, wearing make-up, wanting to marry someone outside the community or wanting to leave an abusive marriage. She also introduced some best practices to combat honor based-violence including heightening awareness, implementing and enforcing strict laws, providing survivor centered care, and education of children and teachers.

All four experts cited examples of best practices for easing access of victims to protection services, including the creation of 24-hour hotlines and messaging hotlines, provision of online services such as e-reporting, e-protection and e-emergency orders, inclusion of medical services for victims of GBV in establishment of medical facilities and centers, establishment of alert systems in pharmacies and food stores, and creation of temporary shelters in vacant hotels.

Before turning over to the Q&A, the moderator, **Linda Liu**, summed up some important points drawn from the presentation. She noted that though tragic that VAWG has increased during the pandemic, the spotlight on the issue will hopefully lead to the incorporation of policies, measures and practices to prevent and end VAWG in national and local recovery plans that will rebuild the world back better.

Dr. Jungsook Kim closed the event and expressed her appreciation to the all the speakers for their presentations and to participants for their participation.



Ms. Linda Liu

Reports from UN Representatives

UN New York

While the CSW65 was held virtually, the Opening Session on 15 March 2021 was held as a formal in person meeting with various member states attending and UN Women participating. The Ministerial Round Tables were held in the afternoon as virtual informal meetings. Due to space limitations, most NGOs attended virtually and Dr. Elizabeth Carll, ICW main Representative to UN New York, attended the opening session.



*Elizabeth Carll, ICW-CIF
Representative to UN NY*

The CSW65 side event, Women's & Children's Health and Well-Being: Implementing Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the Amelioration of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in the Context of COVID-19, was organized by ICW team in New York, and was also co-sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Jamaica and Thailand to the United Nations, the WHO Office at the United Nations, New York; and other supporters.

Participants included the Ambassadors of Jamaica and Thailand and the Executive Director, WHO Office at the United Nations, New York. Also participating were civil society experts in health and well-being from Australia, Ukraine and the U.S., including Dr. Lyudmyla Porokhnyak, Chair of National Council of Women of Ukraine, who spoke about health services to underserved people in Ukraine, and Dr. Elizabeth Carll who spearheaded the event and served as the moderator. The Ambassadors spoke about their countries' health services and activities, especially since the emergence of COVID-19. The WHO Executive Director spoke about the recent developments concerning COVID and women's health.

This side event was part of a series of events since 2011 focusing on the integration of NCDs and well-being and women's health. Also, the importance of the inclusion of NCDs, mental health and well-being, and the unique needs of women within universal health coverage (UHC) and primary care has been an important advocacy focus for the past decade and their inclusion within the UNGA resolutions on NCDs, and UHC. While COVID has had detrimental health and economic effect on the world's health systems and development, it has also catapulted the importance of physical and mental health, women's health, as well as the role of women in healthcare and leadership, as a critical global development issue. This has resulted in the recognition that there can be no country and global development without health.

On 27 March 2021, ICW co-sponsored the event "Women Leaders Impact Change". The event was attended by Iryna Kurowyckyj, a long-time member and former co-chair of the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development. The event was a dialogue with women leaders from various sectors and regions who shared their initiatives that supported women's rights and gender equality. The program had 5 excellent speakers including the Honorable Carolyn S. Maloney, US Congressional Representative from District 12 in New York, who spoke of the many documents US diplomats at the UN proposed and the very few that were implemented in the US.

In April, Elizabeth Carll attended a unique and thought-provoking event on “Reasserting Rights: Countering Transnational Anti-Gender Campaigns”. The event was co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Germany, Finland, and Mexico to the UN NY, Heinrich Boll Stiftung, and the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy on the occasion of the launch of CFFP’s study “Power over Rights: Understanding and Countering the Anti-Gender Movement”. This was an informative event that also compared best practices and international initiatives to strengthen women’s and girls’ rights and acknowledge their intersectionalities with other discrimination. Recognizing intersectionalities will increase the likelihood of integration of women’s rights into policy.

Dr. Elizabeth Carll, ICW-CIF Main Representative to UN New York

UN Geneva



Nazhat Shameen Khan,
President of HRC

The 46th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) was held from 22nd February-19th March 2021 under the Presidency of Nazhat Shameen Khan (Fiji), who will serve until the end of the year. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights presented reports on Guatemala, Honduras, and Colombia as well as on the human rights implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also covered were the situation of human rights in Belarus in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election and in its aftermath, the situation of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, discrimination and violence against persons based on religion or belief and reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

Four panel discussions were held, including “The state of play in the fight against racism and discrimination 20 years after the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action and the exacerbating effects the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has had on these efforts,” the biennial discussion on “Human rights violations related to the use of the death penalty, in particular with respect to whether the use of the death penalty has a deterrent effect on crime rate,” an annual full-day meeting on “The rights of the child and the Sustainable Development Goals” and an annual interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities on the theme “Participation in sport under Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”.

The mandates of several Independent Experts (IE) and Special Rapporteurs (SR) were extended, including the IE on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights. Also extended were the mandates of the SR on the right to privacy, SR on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material, and SR on the rights of persons with disabilities. A new mandate holder was appointed as SR on adequate housing, Balakrishnan Rajagopal.

CEDAW Sessions held virtually due to ongoing coronavirus pandemic

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the CEDAW committee was unable to meet in person resulting in its 76th and 77th session being held remotely. On 14 January 2021, the CEDAW committee issued a statement reiterating their commitment to their mandate which said:

“The CEDAW Committee remains deeply concerned about the devastating impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic on the realization of women's human rights and on the international human rights system. The Committee had in that regard issued a statement on 21 April 2020, calling for joint action and solidarity from a women's human rights perspective in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Regrettably, the pandemic shows little sign of abating in this new year.

The crisis has exacerbated hardship, poverty, gender-based-violence and discrimination faced by women and girls across the world and made it more difficult for measures to be put in place and enforced for their protection. There is a stronger need in such circumstances to exercise vigilance and ensure that women's rights under the Convention are duly upheld by States parties and all stakeholders. The Committee is mindful in that regard of its important mandate to monitor the progress made by States parties in implementing the Convention. Further, it is aware of the crucial role of women's rights and empowerment in the post-COVID reconstruction process.”

The 78th Session of the CEDAW Committee was also held remotely from 15-25th February 2021. Apart from Denmark, all State parties reviews were postponed until the 79th session.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Published General Comment 25 on children's rights in relation to the digital environment. On 24th March 2021, the CRC published its legal guidance note on how States should protect children's rights in the digital environment. The General Comment followed a two-year consultation with all stakeholders. Luis Pedernera, Chair of the Committee stated: “Meaningful access to digital technologies can empower children and support them to realize the full range of their civil, political, cultural, economic and social rights. If such technologies are available only for some children and not others, it will lead to greater inequalities and affect their opportunities for the future.”



Luis Pedernera,
Chair of the Committee

The Committee recommends that States protect children from harmful and misleading content and all forms of violence in the digital environment, including child trafficking, gender-based violence, cyber-aggression, cyber-attacks and information warfare. The Committee also emphasized the importance of protecting children's privacy at all times and that businesses should not target children for commercial purposes, nor use immersive advertising in virtual environments to promote products and services to children.

On Friday 19th March, I spoke on a panel session entitled ‘Amplifying the voices of child marriage and protecting the rights of widows’ organised by the North America and Europe CSW caucuses. My presentation covered the progress made to date to eliminate child marriage around the world and explained the inter-linkages between child marriage and child widows based on our published research reports. Panel speakers included Satvika Chalasani, UNFPA lead on Child Marriage; Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, the African Union Ambassador on Child Marriage; Miranda Dobson, Girls Not Brides; and others.

CSW65 was followed by the Generation Equality Forum hosted by Mexico on 29-31 March which aimed to generate urgent action and accountability on gender equality, highlighting the power of women's rights

activism, feminist solidarity and youth leadership to achieve transformative change. The Forum reviewed the progress made since the Beijing Conference in 1995 and proposed concrete measures to advance gender equality between now and 2030. Around 10,000 participants from 85 countries participated to reinvigorate action and movements for gender equality. The Generation Equality Forum will culminate in Paris, France from 30th June to 2nd July 2021 which should be a landmark event.

Mohinder Watson, ICW-CIF Main Representative to UN Geneva

UN Vienna



Eleonore Hauer-Rona,
ICW-CIF Representative
to UN Vienna

The pandemic poses manyfold challenges to all of us. The growing number of virtual and/or hybrid meetings and conferences lead to new forms of communication: reducing time for reporting, difficulties to combine working from home office together with the daily family and household tasks. On the other hand, everybody can find more detailed information on the internet and we are able to meet with our colleagues without traveling.

Since the beginning of the year for us three important conferences kept me busy: the 14th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Kyoto, Japan on 7-12 March, followed by the 65th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on 15-26 March in New York and the 64th Session of the Commission on the Narcotic Drugs (CND) on 12-16 April in Vienna. The Crime Congress organized in cooperation with the Japanese government and the Session of the CND are under the competence/authority of the UNODC. The outcome of the Crime Congress will be dealt with during the upcoming Session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) to be held 17-21 May 2021.

『 *The 64th Session of the Commission on the Narcotic Drugs (CND) on 12-16 April 2021* 』

The hybrid 64th Session of the CND, chaired by Ambassador Dominika Krois from Poland, marked sixty years of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, fifty years of the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and five years of UNGASS 2016 and its ground-breaking outcome document. For the first time, Jamie Bridge, Chair of the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs (VNGOC), gave a statement during the Ceremonial Opening Segment, stressing the importance of the collaboration of Civil Society and the UNODC. He also spoke towards the end of the CND on Agenda Item 10: Provisional Agenda for the 65th Session of the CND.



Executive Director, Ghada Waly, stated that together with the 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances the abovementioned conventions form the cornerstone of

the balanced and comprehensive international drug control system. Additional important instruments are i. a. the 2019 Ministerial Declaration and the 2011 MoU between UNODC and SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization).

A CND High-Level Side Event dealt with “International Frameworks and Regional Responses. 60th Anniversary of the 1961 Convention and the 10th Anniversary of MoU between SCO and UNODC”.

It was clear that COVID-19 and the resulting economic downturn threaten to further worsen the impact of crime. Illicit drug markets prove to be resilient even in unprecedented conditions, non-medical use of pharmaceutical drugs, virus-related restrictions limiting social and recreational activities and cybercrime are but a few challenges of our days. The pandemic also has wide-ranging effects on the drug situation and the stability and therefore also on the sustainable development.

The need of shared responsibility, protection of health and welfare of people is now more important than ever before. The pandemic has reversed progress in reducing poverty and achieving the SDGs. Our efforts to achieve them should not be impaired by the growing complexity of the world drug problem. Life-saving services, access, and availability of controlled medicines have to be brought up to the necessary standards.

Research and data collection remain relevant as the end of the COVID-19 crisis is not yet seen and we will be dealing with its consequences for many years to come. Meanwhile, traditional Informal dialogues of CS with the Executive Director, the INCB President and with WHO provided again highly important information.

During the GA of the VNGOC also elections to the board took place. Jamie Bridge continues as chair.

Eleonore Hauer-Rona, ICW-CIF Main Representative to UN Vienna

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

On March 23, Simonne Mirabel, ICW-CIF Representative to UNESCO, attended the virtual discussion of the UN women with the theme, the role of women's rights organizations in the response to the COVID-19.

The recent research and data show that, throughout the pandemic, women's organizations have stepped into action around the world because the impacts on women have been numerous: violence against women and girls, unpaid care work and livelihood security. There were Government led responses, but more or less significant with variations across regions and countries, particularly less attention paid to women's economic security and unpaid care. As for the community led responses, they were often invisible.

How are women's rights organizations responding while COVID-19 is compounding challenges for women's rights organizations? By two means, advocacy, action:

- Filling gaps in essential services: distributing food aid, organizing collective childcare, supporting survivors of violence, while a lot of civic spaces have been closed;
- Advocating for gender policy responses even forming transnational alliances to influence state responses,

- mobilizing in innovative ways to protest human rights violations;
- Fighting the funding shortages and changing donor priorities;

However, advocacy and action are difficult because everywhere working conditions have been exacerbated by COVID-19. **Facing such situations, which recommendations could be set up?**

We must rebuild women's rights organizations with additional system in the future.

- Recognize women's rights organizations as essential service providers and promote safe working conditions
- Safeguard civic spaces and protect women defending human rights
- Sustain and increase funding to support women's rights organizations
- Design an organization that makes it easier to resist so that basic services are provided, and to facilitate also access to justice.

Finally in conclusion two speakers from UN Women recalled how much women, boss of a small firm, have taken action around the world with associations going beyond government actions.



Simonne Mirabel, ICW-CIF
Representative to UNESCO

Simonne Mirabel, ICW-CIF Representative to UNESCO

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

As ICW Representative to FAO, I could verify that all the activities have been affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic crisis, therefore conferences and meetings have been always carried out virtually. The COVID-19 pandemic will see more than a quarter of a billion people suffering acute hunger by the end of the year, according to new figures from the World Food Program (WFP).

The latest numbers indicate the lives and livelihoods of 265 million people in low and middle-income countries will be under severe threat unless swift action is taken to tackle the pandemic, up from a current 135 million. That is nearly double the number in the newly published Global Report on Food Crises 2020, which estimates that 135 million people in 55 countries currently face acute hunger as a result chiefly of conflict, the effects of climate change, and economic crises.

That report was drawn up prior to the emergence of COVID-19 as a pandemic, and the contrasting figures provide a startling insight into the devastating potential of this virus. The concern is highest for those in countries across Africa as well as the Middle East, as the virus threatens lives and livelihoods along with the trading networks they rely on for survival.

Emphasizing the interconnectedness of environmental, animal, and human health, FAO Director-General, Qu Dongyu, reiterated FAO's commitment to continue supporting the mainstreaming of biodiversity across agriculture and food sectors also by the Hand in Hand Initiative.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the close links between human, animal and environmental health, in a context of increased human-livestock-wildlife contacts and ecosystem degradation," the Director-General said in his recent speech, noting the "importance of environmental sustainability as a key determinant of a long term - One Health for All".

He alluded to the strong support of FAO to the establishment of the One Health High Expert Council, stressing the need to address inequalities in health, as "there can be no health security if vulnerable in the rural area are left behind".

Among the relevant themes debated during the latest webinars I attended, there is The Soil Governance on January 13, 2021. The Webinar coincides with the launch of SoiLEX, a global database on national legislation on soil that aims to facilitate access to existing legal instruments and to bridge the gap between soil stakeholders.

Soil is one of the essential components of a productive agricultural sector and is a key provider of ecosystem services, such as regulating climate change and water flows, providing clean water, food, feed, and fuel, supporting human infrastructure, and buffering and filtering contaminants. However, due to the complexity of soil resources and the different stakeholders that benefit from them, soil governance is generally addressed in a dispersed manner in current national and international legal frameworks, ranging from agricultural legislation to regulations on mining, urban development, and environmental protection.

I also attended the 47th Session of Committee on World Food Security (CFS) which was held virtually on 8 - 11 February 2021. During the conference, the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition were submitted to the approval of the Member States.

The objective of the Voluntary Guidelines is to contribute to reshaping or promoting food systems to ensure that the food that contributes to healthy diets is available, affordable, acceptable, safe and of adequate quantity and quality while conforming with beliefs, cultures, traditions, and dietary habits.

Generally understood as the right to feed oneself in dignity, the right to adequate food is a long-standing international human right to which many countries are committed. Over the last decades, several countries have developed and implemented constitutional amendments, national laws, strategies, policies, and programs that aim at the fulfillment for all of the right to food.

During the Plenary Session, the CFS was also called to endorse the Terms of Reference of the Guidelines on Gender equality and women's empowerment.



Nanda Nobile,
ICW-CIF Representative
to FAO

Nanda Nobile, ICW-CIF Representative to FAO

Reports from the Standing Committees

Report by ICW-CIF Arts and Letters Advisor



Jennifer Ann Davies,
Arts & Letters Advisor

Communications, Celebrations and Concerns continue, though COVID clouded. Concerns may lessen in a 50/50 world, towards which we strive. President of NCW Ukraine, **Lyudmyla POROKHNYAK**, and sociologist, **Nadiia KOMAROVA**, cite: "... women suffer greatly from reduced income, additional burdens of schooling children, caring for the sick and domestic violence... Although gender related, **15 to 40% of victims are male...**elderly and children are most vulnerable...". "Domestic violence rates are increasing in Ukraine during COVID-19 pandemic." SDGs 1/2/3/4/5/10/16/17

UK, Turkey, Ireland, Africa, Tunisia, and Australia are a few of the many countries that still have flaws in systems overridden by civil and family law. **Australia** has a huge blockage in the Federal system, which our Councils lobby to address with projects to attain "**Access to the rule of law for victims of domestic violence.**" **Scotland** hopes to eliminate the psycho-drama of today's politics and gain focus on policy and issues that will contribute constructively to the protection of all. In the UK, sunshine, personal contact and smiles help replenish HOPE! Experts, however, declare that people in the UK will need facemasks until 2022 and may need to protect themselves for years to come. SDGs 1/8/10/11/17

Eleonore Hauer-Rona, ICW Main Representative to UN in Vienna, **Austria**, cites a resolution from the Global Report on Trafficking: Effective Implementation of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. SDGs 1/2/4/8/10/11/16

Congratulations to the National Council of Turkish Women who provided wonderful material for the COVID publication, and compiled beautiful art pieces in a book called **PANDEMIC ART BOOK OF NCTW 2020**. You will enjoy their photos and projects! SDGs 3/4/17

The Cairns African Association hosted a vibrant function to celebrate 2021 International Women's Day! Energized with music, dance, song, fashion, food and fun, the group, whose members are from a variety of African ethnic backgrounds, representing more than 15 African countries, welcomed us with Joy!!

HIDDEN NO MORE – A Joint initiative of UNAA Queensland, Australia revealed: **Australian and Queensland Economies** are propped up by slavery, using backpackers, migrants, families, and youth often in unsafe living and working conditions. In the **Netherlands**, 4 banks investigated revealed transactions that found 700 cases of corruption and 2 new slavery rings in Europe, after only 2 weeks of analysis. SDGs 1/2/3/4/8/10/11/16

Truth and fiction; balance and dissonance are powerfully interpreted through the photographs of **Sammy Baloji – from the Democratic Republic of Congo** and **Ade Adekola** who lives and works in **Lagos, Nigeria**. The artists juxtapose bleak scenes from a Chinese owned mine in the Democratic Republic of Congo with colorful images of the miners' shacks. Adekola's ethnoscares explore paradoxical traits of social networks, globalization

and identity. The artist superimposes streetscapes shot in Lagos, over backdrops of major American, Asian and European cities. Doing this, we are confronted by hybrid streetscapes filled with an unnerving visual tension between simultaneously existing worlds! Stunning works included the **Eiffel Tower and Le Louvre**. Unfortunately, a new lockdown was imposed and I did not get Cairns Art Gallery Australia. SDGs 4/8/9/10/11/12/17



One of the mines in the Congo
Cairns Art Gallery Australia

Italy is still offering TOURS – The Science of the Renaissance, on which one can encounter the great scientific minds and discoveries of the Renaissance on a cultural adventure across **Florence, Pisa and Bologna**. Discoveries include astronomic, anatomic, architectural and mathematic perspectives, and combine with the fascinating stories of polymath's Da Vinci and Galileo, and tales and works of formerly hidden women artists! SDGs 4/12/17

The world of letters is rich in Truth – and that truth includes heartache, brutality, cruelty and loss as well as love, hope, joy, kindness, friendship and kinship. An extraordinary book has come our way... **“Ma, He Sold Me for a Few Cigarettes”** A heart-rending memoir that will both horrify and inspire. **Martha LONG** was born to a teenage mother in the slums of 1950s Dublin. The memoir is written in Martha's dialect – a rich Irish/Celtic/Anglo lingual mix! A must read for everyone with a heart! SDGs 1/2/3/5/10/11/16

Jennifer Ann Davies, ICW-CIF Arts and Letters Advisor

Report by ICW-CIF Environment Advisor



Wendy Rainbird,
Environment Advisor

『 *Why the health of our seas and oceans matter* 』

Our oceans and seas produce oxygen, help regulate the weather, provide food and livelihoods. They are also places of adventure, fun, exercise, beauty, and spiritual connection. Yet human activity is responsible for many stressors at those places: Oceans are absorbing heat, becoming more acid, being more polluted especially with plastics, and being over-fished.

1. Oceans are absorbing more than 90% of the excess heat in the global climate system (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change - IPCC). Marine heat waves are becoming more common (World Meteorological Organization-WMO), and they cause coral reefs to bleach and damage or destroy other ecosystems like kelp forests, that are habitats and nurseries for marine species.
2. Oceans and seas absorb much of the excess carbon dioxide (CO₂) that humans are producing. The CO₂ is causing the seas to become more acidic. (J. Rummer et al, 7 Dec 2020)

"The effects of warmer seas are magnified by ocean acidification. More than half a billion people depend on coral reefs for food, income, and protection from storms and coastal erosion. Reefs provide jobs — such as



in tourism and fishing – and places for recreation. Globally, coral reefs represent an industry worth the US \$11.9 trillion per year." (ibid)

Ocean acidification threatens weakening the shells of mollusks like oysters and scallops, and the exoskeletons of crustaceans like prawns and lobsters. It has been found that crucial food web species like phytoplankton are weakened by it too. (ibid)

Cutting greenhouse gas emissions must become a global mission. COVID-19 has slowed our movements across the planet, showing it's possible to radically slash our production of CO₂. If the world meets the most ambitious goals of the Paris Agreement and keeps global temperature increases below 1.5°C, the Pacific will experience far less severe decreases in oceanic pH. (K. Petrou & D. Nielson, 27/8/19)

3. Humans are polluting these places. "The problem of ocean plastic was scientifically recognized in the 1960s after two scientists saw albatross carcasses littering the beaches of the northwest Hawaiian Islands in the northern Pacific. Almost three in four albatross chicks, who died before they could fledge, had plastic in their stomachs. Now, plastic debris is found in all major marine habitats around the world, in sizes ranging from nanometres to metres. A small portion of this accumulates into giant floating "garbage patches". (ibid)

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report on water pollution by plastics and microplastics presents a range of solutions to reduce plastic and microplastic pollution from the source to the sea. It also encourages policymakers and practitioners to set priorities and select those that are more cost-effective and suitable for their local context. Finally, it stresses the importance of having technical solutions in addition to appropriate legislation, economic instruments, education, and awareness.

4. A major source of food protein for people comes from the sea, yet some human activities, especially big fish-factory ships are overfishing this important food source.

In the International Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Studies 2020, overfishing happens when humans extract fish resources beyond the maximum level, known as the "maximum sustainable yield". Fishing beyond this causes global fish stocks to decline, disrupts food chains, degrades habitats, and creates food scarcity for humans.

According to the Maritime Executive news, it says, "Humans take about 80 million tonnes of wildlife from the sea each year. In 2019, the world's leading scientists said of all threats to marine biodiversity over the past 50 years, fishing has caused the most harm. They said 33 percent of fish species were overexploited, 60 percent were being fished to the maximum level, and just 7 percent were underfished. The decline in fish populations is not just a problem for humans. Fish play an important role in marine ecosystems and are a crucial link in the ocean's complex food webs."

Members of ICW need to play their part in taking actions that will change these adverse effects on our oceans and seas and the marine life in them, by calling for urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; finding the sources of excessive plastic use, and urge communities to "Refuse plastic, Reduce plastic, Reuse plastic or Recycle it; and calling on governments to implement sustainable fisheries including monitoring and managing effectively.

Report by ICW-CIF International Relations & Peace Advisor

It is with pleasure that I am submitting a summary report regarding my activities during the period of January-April 2021:

1. CSW participation

In addition to my participation in dozens of side and parallel events held during the CSW65, I am pleased to inform you that I was co-organizer of the Parallel-Event held by Women Wage Peace (WWP) on the topic of "Breaking Paradigms: Local Women Peace Initiatives to Promote the Full Participation of Women in Decisions to Peace and Security". WWP stands up to advance a peace and security agenda that can be inclusive, involving everyone. Women are needed more than ever because each woman herself can be a fundamental agent of change. This element of inclusion is necessary for shaping values of peace and tolerance and is a key component in preventing violence and conflict.



*Mazal Renford,
International Relations &
Peace Advisor*

The relevant UN Resolution 1325 addresses not only the inordinate impact of war on women, but mainly the pivotal role of women in conflict management and sustainable peace. In this connection, WWP is a full partner for peace, playing a vital role by mobilizing public opinion, influencing Israel's governmental decisions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and by initiating projects and programs for peace-building and peaceful coexistence.

The keynote speaker of this parallel-event was the Hon. Senator Mobina Jaffer from Canada whom I have the honor to know personally as a fervent peace activist with a rich experience from conflict areas in Sudan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and other parts of the world.

I was also delighted to cooperate with the NCW France by being a panelist on the parallel event organized by them together with UN Women France, and which event included outstanding speakers.

2. ALLMEP – Alliance for Middle- East Peace

I had the opportunity to join the annual Memorial Ceremony of this important organization which shared a powerful video on the challenges and impact of the joint efforts of combatants for peace. It should be mentioned that for the sixteenth year in a row, Israelis and Palestinians are gathering together to remember the fallen and shift the conversation towards hope and reconciliation. This is an example of what can be achieved when those in the field work together, and when the focus is not only on shared humanity and grief, but also on the hope for a better future that can unite people in conflict.

3. SID-ISRAEL - Society for International Development

Being myself an active Board Member of the Israeli Chapter of this international organization gives me the opportunity to follow the activities undertaken by its members. ISRAAID, one of its connected organizations dealing with humanitarian problems in the world, established recently a Child Friendly Space (CFS) in Mozambique after, in January 2021, Cyclone Eloise displaced several thousand people in this country. Over



2,500 families are now trying to build a new home in the affected area of Guara-Guara, but many children do not have access to education nor to a safe place to play. Through this project, children participate in recreational activities whilst receiving psychological support to help minimize their trauma and the long-term impact of the emergency.

4. International Cooperation and Women Leadership

It is with much satisfaction that I am currently reporting also about the long-term project I had the privilege to initiate in Kenya some years ago on behalf of Israel's Agency for International Cooperation (MASHAV), together with UN Women in East and Central Africa. Within this framework, the Africa Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership (ACTIL) was established in partnership with Kenyatta University in Nairobi. The project in question seeks to raise transformative women leaders and build their leadership competencies in politics, business, government and society to drive accelerated and sustainable development in Africa, taking into consideration increasing challenges and complexities, influenced by both local and global developments.

As a vibrant and innovative training centre, ACTIL continues to bring much-needed change, creating a positive impact and a multilevel ripple effect which starts with the holistic transformation of the leaders, and transcends to their families, communities and countries, benefiting societies and humanity at large. Another training centre, based on the same model, was established in Senegal for the benefit of women from West Africa, and remains currently active, under the responsibility of the local authorities.

5. Global Networking Meetup for Jewish and Israeli International Development Practitioners

In March, I also had the chance to attend this interesting meeting hosted by the Pears Program for Global Innovation. Around 40 of us caught up there with old friends, made new connections and discussed how we can co-collaborate to increase our collective impact in the world of international development.

Mazal Renford, ICW-CIF International Relations & Peace Advisor

Report by ICW-CIF Nutrition Advisor

In March of 2020, COVID-19 was declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organization. The effects of COVID-19 still linger over the entire world with the devastating effects of the 2nd and 3rd waves of the sickness. While all countries have been actively rolling out vaccinations, nutrition still seems to be the primary way to build immunity and to bear the brunt of the illness. Most National Councils of Women have played an important role in ensuring that awareness on the importance of proper nutrition is created and have also distributed nutrition meals or packages to the needy.

National Union of Women of Morocco (UNFM), through its regional associations, carried out solidarity campaigns by distributing food aid baskets for vulnerable families & distributed food supplement kits (Vitamins), and medicines for pregnant women, milk and flour cereals for newborns and babies from 1 to 6 months in both rural and peri-urban areas.

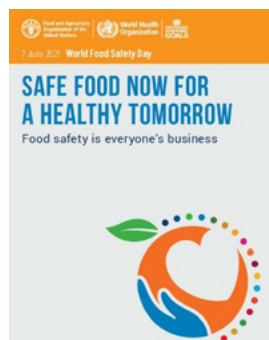
National Council of Women of Malta held six webinars, seeing a total of 126 participants in sessions covering many topics including, mental well-being, nutrition, the new cohabitation law, recycling waste, and being pregnant during a pandemic. The webinar specific to Nutrition was titled 'Nutrition Post COVID-19' by Nutritionist, Fleur Bugeja.

National Council of Women of India (NCWI) also reported continual distribution of food packets and hygiene packets through their 20 affiliate state councils in various parts of India. The NCWI has also catered to the much-affected communities that do not receive support like the transgender community and children of sex workers.

Nutrition to combat COVID-19 pandemic

It has been a little over a year since COVID-19 was declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organization. With the increased rate of infection, two factors have become a high priority worldwide; rolling out of vaccinations to combat COVID-19 and the correct nutrition as a preventative and recovery across all ages of the population. Many countries, under the guidance of WHO, have Nutritional Advice Plans for various age group specifically to combat the COVID-19.

- Regional Office of Eastern Mediterranean put out publications and advised the citizens to eat fresh and unprocessed food, stay hydrated with 8 to 10 glasses of water, avoid eating out, include moderate amounts of healthy fats and oils to the diet and eat less salt and sugar.
- India and most Asian Countries have emphasized on using traditional alternative medications and herbal teas to build immunity.
- Many studies like the one published by Royal College of Physicians has stressed the need to have adequate levels of Vitamin D to help increase the T Regulatory Lymphocytes (Tregs) in the body to fight against viral infections particularly affecting the respiratory system.



The theme for World Food Safety Day (WFSD) on 7 June 2021 is "Safe food today for a healthy tomorrow", stresses that production and consumption of safe food has immediate and long-term benefits for people, the planet and the economy. Through the WFSD, World Health Organization (WHO) works to mainstream food safety in the public agenda and reduce the burden of foodborne diseases globally making food safety everyone's business.

Rakhi Shetty, ICW-CIF Nutrition Advisor

Reports from Member Councils (NCWs)

■ National Council of Women of Australia ■

Summer in Australia has come and gone. While Australia is doing exceptionally well with very little if any community transmission of COVID-19 returning Australians and others coming to Australia are still having COVID-19 identified almost every day.

The vaccine roll-out has commenced fairly slowly to begin with however it will increase as Australia moves through to the larger general cohort of those wishing to be vaccinated. The COVID-19 vaccine is free for everyone in Australia.

The recent Australian Government Cabinet reshuffle has seen a greater emphasis placed on Economic Security for Women and Women's Safety - the two important issues highlighted by NCWA over this current Triennial.



Australian women recently celebrated International Women's Day (IWD) on 8 March 2021. Constituent Councils celebrated the day one way or another. In 1913, IWD was moved to 8 March and has been held on this day ever since Australia's first IWD was held in 1928 in Sydney. It is a day to celebrate women's achievements and both highlight and work to address the barriers that are still in existence.

In March 2021 Australia, in particular, Western Australia saw the commemoration of Edith Cowan. It is one hundred years since Edith Cowan became the first woman parliamentarian. Edith Cowan won the seat of West Perth by a razor-thin margin of forty-six votes. Prior to being elected to Parliament, Edith Cowan held numerous positions in many organisations and was the second President of NCWWA 1913-1921. Edith Cowan advocated for compulsory voting and proportional representation as well as better education for women. She was also instrumental in the establishment of the King Edward Memorial Hospital for women in 1916. She also fought against domestic violence, drunkenness and spoke openly about prostitution, contraception, and sex crimes. She also campaigned for women to become Justices of the Peace.



Edith Cowan

Vale: Judith Ann Parker, a former President of NCWA 2000-2003, passed away recently aged 80 years in Brisbane Australia. Judith was also a President of NCWWA from 2005-2007.

Reported by Robyn Nolan, President of NCWA

■ National Council of Women of Belgium (Dutch Speaking) ■

< New director-coordinator: Kim De Weerd >

Kim De Weerd (1978) is succeeding Leen Scheerlinck who transformed the Dutch-speaking Council of Women of Belgium into a contemporary and modern organization during the past twenty years. The new director studied Roman languages and women's studies in Brussels, Antwerp, and Aix-en-Provence, and worked in managerial positions at different Academies of Visual Arts in Antwerp. She also has passion for equal opportunities, gender issues, diversity and intersectionality. She hopes to contribute to the realization of equal treatment and opportunities for all girls and women as well as for boys and men. Kim De Weerd said, "We need to listen to each other with an open mind so that we keep on learning from the other(s)".



Kim De Weerd,
Director-coordinator

< Project 'M² - put an end to period poverty!' is operational >

Research by Caritas made us aware of the fact that 1 out of 8 girls/women in Flanders sometimes cannot buy sanitary napkins or tampons. The federal minister for poverty reduction assigned 200,000 euros to the two Belgian Councils of Women so that they could start dealing with this injustice.

NCW Belgium approved 15 projects in Flanders and Brussels, introduced by our affiliated organizations. Each of them received 5000 euros. The projects are not just meant to distribute products for free, but to map the problem, to commit to the sustainability of period products, and to cope with 'period shame'. We can safely say that the projects are educating, raising awareness and empowering women. An ultimate goal is a universal approach to period poverty in order to reach a society with gender equality.

< Webinar at the occasion of International Women's Day: fight for women's rights! >

NCW Belgium organized a free webinar in collaboration with different women's organizations to cluster our common demands for the federal and the Flemish governments: the combat against economic precariousness and the introduction of a socio-economic policy that is sustainable, ecological and feminist. President of NCW Belgium, Meron Knikman, talked about health, harassment, the rights of migrant women, peace, and international solidarity.

< Launching of the brochure, 'The Purple Pact: A care deal for Flanders' >

The European Women's Lobby (EWL), the biggest alliance of more than 2000 non-governmental women's organizations in the EU, edited its vision on a feminist Europe in 2019 under the title 'The Purple Pact'. This designation is based on the idea of a purple economy including gender equality and sustainability.

Magda De Meyer, former president of NCW Belgium, was part of the working group Feminist Economic Research. She is a strong advocate of the transition towards a feminist economics. Such a society recognizes the value of care,



creates wellbeing and not just welfare, sees diversity as enriching, makes sure that gender and environmental injustices disappear and uses ethical criteria to create a world that leaves no one behind.

Whilst the EWL uses this pact to disseminate and deepen its vision, they fight together with members and allies for feminist perspectives in the coming EU strategy for economy and jobs.

We translated the Purple Pact into 'Het Paarse Pact': our reply to the question of a better world post-COVID-19 is to be found in the brochure 'A care deal for Flanders'.

A careful and sustainable feminist economy needs a crucial role for affordable, qualitative, and accessible public services such as child care and public transportation. But also it needs to reduce working hours in order to be able to combine as best as a possible job, family, care, social engagement, and leisure. This will create more well-being and more happiness for both women and men. The fight against violence must be geared up. We are in desperate need of green and safe public spaces with free public toilets. Imagery must be non-stereotypical. Each family should get the occasion to save energy and to protect the environment. Cities should become providers of qualitative and affordable housing. This is the only right way to take care of each other and our planet.

Reported by Meron Knikman, President of NCW Belgium

■ National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) ■

Parts of Canada are starting to enjoy the warm days of spring; others of us are still languishing in the throes of snowstorms and below zero temperatures. Have a look at these differences!



Regina, Saskatchewan April 13, 2021



Victoria, British Columbia April 06, 2021

Well, whatever the weather, the NCWC is busy making plans for our second virtual AGM! It will be held on Friday, May 28th, and Saturday, May 29th. We have engaged the same facilitator and will be using the same platform as our last virtual meeting. We are confident this will allow us to conduct the business so necessary to the efficient operation of our organization.

Our grassroots Councils, Federates, and individual members have prepared five resolutions and two updates for discussion at the AGM. The resolution topics range from the protection of the environment to the availability of sexual assault forensic exams (rape kits), and the formal recognition of women veterans of the Canadian Forces. Updates to our current policies include the benefits of early childhood education and the



necessity for the appointment of a Commissioner for Canadian Children. Due to the continuing COVID crisis, we will also anticipate the inclusion of several emergent resolutions.

On April 19th, our federal government presented its first budget in two years, and for the first time in the history of Canada, the budget was prepared and presented by two women, Chrystia Freeland, who is the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, and Mona Fortier, the Minister for Middle-Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance.

The NCWC was invited to participate in pre-budget consultations, and we pressed for the inclusion of a national childcare plan that is affordable, accessible, and staffed with highly trained child educators. The government has committed up to \$30 billion by 2026 with an ongoing \$8.3 billion annually after that to maintain the program so child-care costs would be capped at \$10 per day.

Our second most pressing request has been the enactment of a universal basic income that would lift many women, children, and families out of poverty and protect them from precarious employment. While this goal was not achieved, the Canada Recovery Benefit has been extended. It provides \$2,000 per month to persons who are unemployed due to the pandemic and mandates a \$15 an hour minimum wage for federally regulated industries. We were also pleased to have money allotted to other areas of our advocacy – combating sexual misconduct in the military, addressing the recommendations of the inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, racism in health care settings, and supporting all women in a post-pandemic economy.

The NCWC had 24 delegates attend the virtual UN CSW65 last month, and we found it quite empowering! We invited our delegates to pre and post session briefings, and we intend to work toward ensuring the themes for the CSW become a year-round focus, not just in the weeks prior to and after the event. The NCWC co-hosted two parallel events. The first one was titled the 'Dual Pandemic' which dealt with the increase in domestic violence during the pandemic with so many women, particularly Indigenous women, forced to live with abusive spouses 24/7. Our second event focused on the role of women in peace building in areas of conflict. You may watch it on this link: <http://cdn.filestackcontent.com/P9QiHdvS3q9EngdB1MiB> Both events were very well attended and produced solutions to the issues, not just a rehashing of the problems. We are grateful for the talented speakers who gave of their time and expertise to make these events a success.

Vaccines to control the spread of COVID-19 have been rolling out at various speeds across Canada. It is so disappointing to note there are still large demonstrations of those opposed to the vaccines and the government-issued health regulations designed to curb the spread of the virus. This is of particular concern as many of our hospitals are strained to their maximum capacity, and our ICUs are full. The NCWC has been proactive in promoting the vaccines on our social media sites, and we encourage others to post their pictures encouraging others to do so.

And so, the NCWC continues the tradition of being the voice for those who have neither the strength nor the courage to do so for themselves. We have been flexible and resilient in adapting to the changing circumstances dictated by the pandemic, and we have found inner strength and determination knowing that our advocacy is needed now more than ever. We are at a pivotal moment in moving forward to a more inclusive, equal, and integrated society; the NCWC will do its part to ensure no one is left behind.



■ National Council of Women of France (CNFF) ■

Despite the pandemic situation, the CNFF and its member associations continued their actions in favor of equality between women and men. CNFF continued our lobbying actions to encourage girls to study in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Our second volume of the White Paper on Professional Equality is on its way. We are conducting a reflection to make proposals promoting the economic empowerment of women because economic violence in the private sphere is a scourge, like all violence against women.

CNFF also participated in the CSW65 and organized a parallel event with the UN FEMMES France on the theme of "Women's Leadership, an opportunity to transform society" with the participation of ECICW and the French Association of Women in Legal Careers. Several of our members have also participated in other sessions organized by other associations.

CNFF has taken a position to eradicate pedocriminality.

Under the terms of its statutes written in 1901, the National Council of Women of France (CNFF) aims to establish a bond of solidarity with various societies and works for women's rights, which will allow its members to confer together on questions relating to their social interests, rights and duties in society and the family". CNFF believes that defending the rights of women cannot be accomplished without including children. Families and women are inseparable and the abuse of children is naturally an integral part of our struggle. During the Grenelle debate on domestic violence, we pointed out the phenomena of incest and mistreatment and called for extreme vigilance about the behavior of the child. We may deliver the courageous testimonies of victims of sexual abuse, rape, and/or incest, serve to free speech, and lift taboos in all of society, whatever the social or intellectual background and culture.

The CNFF welcomes the legislative work in progress to protect minors from sexual crimes and to consider setting 15 years of age as the threshold for non-consent. However, the CNFF considers that this threshold should be raised to 18 years of age in the event of incest by an authoritative adult.

CNFF supports for Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission and call for respect for gender equality.

In 2015 and 2017, there were meetings between Donald Tusk, Predecessor of Charles Michel as President of the European Council, and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of the Republic of Turkey, and Jean-Claude Juncker, Predecessor of Ursula von der Leyen at the Presidency of the European Commission. Jean-Claude Juncker sat to the left of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Donald Tusk to the right.

On April 6, 2021, at a similar meeting in Ankara, Turkey, it was different for Ursula von der Leyen, who had to sit back on a couch. Mr. Erdogan clearly signified that he did not recognize the President of the European Commission as equal as men and thereby demonstrated his opposition to one of the founding principles of the European Union, that of equality between women and men. Mr. Charles Michel revealed the gulf that exists between egalitarian declarations at the highest institutional summits and the reality of discrimination

suffered by women and thus discredited an essential part of European policy.

The CNFF, which has fought for 120 years for equal rights and opportunities between women and men, has joined calls for solidarity with Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission.

From 29 to 31 March, CNFF celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Beijing World Conference on Women at the Generation Equality Forum in Mexico City, which will culminate in Paris from June 30 to July 2, 2021. CNFF calls on women and men in France, Europe, and the world to achieve gender equality. The CNFF asks the National and European Political Authorities to set an example and to ensure respect for equality between women and men in their relations and their diplomatic protocols.

Reported by Marie-Claude Bertrand, President of CNFF

■ CONAMGUA (National Council of Women of Guatemala) ■

CONAMGUA board held its weekly work sessions throughout the year 2020. We had **three Humanitarian Campaigns** to help low-income communities. The first campaign was organized in May/June 2020, distributing sixty bags of food provisions to low-income families. Two months later, as we noticed that the pandemic was even stronger, we held a second effort distributing a similar quantity of staple goods. The members of CONAMGUA financially contributed to both campaigns.



For the third campaign, the board wished to bring some Christmas spirit to our communities, therefore, we arranged leftover staples from the two campaigns before, adding candy and toys and handed out them to 60 families. Also, we were able to distribute 19 water filters for schools and health centers and gave food and clothes to migrant children. We held two zoom meetings to celebrate the 56th Anniversary and Christmas.

Reported by Alcira García-Vassaux, Public Relations Secretary, CONAMGUA

■ National Council of Women in India (NCWI) ■

"It is only in our darkest hours that we may discover the true strength of the brilliant light within ourselves that can never, ever, be dimmed." - Doe Zantamata, Author of Karma

The COVID-19 pandemic has cast a dark shadow over people in India with incurring heavy losses monetarily and emotionally, families cooped up in their 8 feet by 8 feet tin houses, hospitals reaching peak capacity, but the spirit of the people of India has not broken. This pandemic has been a very humbling experience for most and has brought out the best in people. The National Council of Women in India and its affiliate State Councils have continued to work tirelessly to contribute to the needy population of India.



Recently, NCWI had a zoom meeting to discuss matters at hand and to share success stories. It has been to keep our spirits high and to help out in the best way we can. The year 2021 started with the celebration of Republic Day and various festivals like 'Lohri' and 'Basant Panchami' by the affiliate State Councils in their respective cities with distributions of blankets, sweaters, masks, sanitizers, and food packets to the needy in slum areas.

In Bangalore, members also donated medication at psychiatric hospitals. Talks on hygiene and good health habits were organized in village welfare projects in West Bengal and Maharashtra. The NCWI continued its distribution of groceries and hygiene kits to the transgender community, children of sex workers, and the needy. Stationery supplies like compass boxes, pens, and pencils were given to students for their 10th and 12th Board Exams as many of the parents have lost their jobs and spent unexpected medical expenses.



Most of the projects have been working while keeping the COVID-19 regulations and rules and the members of NCWI have ensured that work has continued in full force. We hope that the situation settles down soon so that we can go back to our previous life before the pandemic. Until then, the NCWI team will continue to make its mark in the community.

Reported by Rakhi Shetty, President of NCWI

■ National Council of Women of Indonesia (KOWANI) ■

The phrase "vaccine saves lives" reflects society's enthusiasm especially the elderly who are susceptible to COVID-19 as Indonesia has reached the highest mortality rate (47% of elders). KOWANI conducted webinars to stop transmission of the COVID-19 by socializing and advocating for women.



In line with that, an interesting webinar was also held to get a clear picture of what COVID-19 was like in Slovakia and Australia. The virtual event was officially organized by the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia with the attendance of the Consulate General Indonesia for West Australia and Plenipotentiary Ambassador Indonesia for Slovakia on Tuesday, February 25, 2021.



A half-day virtual meeting was held on March 9, 2021, introducing the use of eco-enzymes as an environmentally friendly cleanser that converts organic waste into a benefit. The fermented liquid from fruits and vegetable skins mixed with sugar and water can be used as a versatile liquid detergent for washing dishes, fruits, clothes, and others. It was one of KOWANI's efforts to protect the environment with 400 participants from all over Indonesia.

Child marriage has become a serious social issue in Indonesia. It was revealed by the Wedding Organizer advertisement that advocates child marriage. KOWANI, as the oldest federation of women's organizations, which houses 98 women's organizations in Indonesia, strongly criticizes child marriage. It is against the law on marriage and child protection. Child marriage has implications for bleeding, premature babies, maternal mortality, underweight babies, and others during childbirth. The underweight babies would continue to be malnourished or stunted or have disproportionately short stature. Various negative impacts such as increases in domestic violence and divorce rate could also occur since psychological children are not ready to be parents. Giwo Rubianto, President of KOWANI, said "Child marriage is against the law. The law should guarantee children's rights to have education, health, and an adequate standard of living. We should protect children's rights by stopping child marriage".



Reported by Giwo Rubianto Wiyogo, President of KOWANI

Consiglio Nazionale Donne Italiane (CNDI) ■



Consiglio Nazionale Donne Italiane (CNDI) has given its patronage to an outstanding Conference that took place in Pavia on 18 - 19th February 2021. The theme of the conference was "Competitive Renaissance through Digital Transformation".

Nowadays worldwide challenges posed by economic, environmental, societal, and health-related conditions are calling governments and organizations to act with urgency. Nations and companies need to rethink and rebuild their competitiveness to address the enormous challenges they are faced with (McKinsey, 2020). While the Renaissance emphasized the magnificence of human potential, a "new renaissance" of the Italian and European system must leverage digital technology to augment human talent and organizational capabilities.

To respond to existential challenges posed by climate change, we should pay attention to the interplay between technological innovation, globalization, and environmental sustainability. Given this, in the Pavia Conference, research papers contributing to the debate on how digital technologies enable a sustainable renaissance of organizations' competitiveness were presented.

Reported by Annamaria Castelfranchi, Chair, International Committee of CNDI

■ Korean National Council of Women (KNCW) ■



The Korean National Council of Women (KNCW) celebrated International Women's Day (IWD) on March 8th. 119 nationwide women's organizations, including 60 KNCW affiliated associations, were represented. There were abundant and diverse female leaders in attendance: ambassadors, political leaders, noted academic figures,

and other experts. The event was live-streamed so that many others could also celebrate International Women's Day.

Speakers made it clear that women are facing severe difficulty around the world due to the coronavirus pandemic. Hope was repeatedly espoused that the global crisis could be conquered through the power of women and that in doing so progress would be made toward true gender equality.

KNCW also held its inauguration ceremony for the new president Myung Huh and executive directors on March 30th. Former presidents of KNCW and members of the government cabinet were in attendance.



KNCW President Myung Huh (center, with flowers) and Executive directors

Reported by Myung Huh, President of KNCW

■ National Council of Women of Morocco (UNFM) ■

One year after the beginning of the epidemic, the world has witnessed a large change in terms of social and development programs and projects towards women and girls. Therefore, National Council of Women of Morocco (UNFM) has multiplied its efforts to advance and protect women's rights, and to promote the culture of innovation and the spirit of entrepreneurship among young Moroccan women, taking into consideration post-COVID-19 effects.

On February 13, through one of its northern regional associations in partnership with the association for the management of drinking water and the preservation of the environment, UNFM organized a solidarity caravan under the theme, "a touch of warmth from Tangier to the inhabitants of the Atlas" distributing food, blankets, clothes, and others to 500 people in rural area.

On February 24, 2021, participation in the virtual workshop of National consultation with civil society organized by UN Women and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates on the elaboration of the national action plan for implementation of the resolution 1325 "women, peace and security".

During International Women's Day (March 8), UNFM launched a series of development programs for women and girls about precautionary measures and prevention of the spread of COVID-19. UNFM in partnership with the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) and the Foundation of the Office Chérifien des Phosphates (OCP) launched "UNFM Market", a space dedicated to the marketing of local products for the benefit of women from rural and semi-urban areas to improve the economic conditions of social categories with limited income.



Also, on the same occasion of the 8th of March, UNFM and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), agreed to conclude a partnership convention, by committing to strengthening their cooperation and collaboration in order to: - Improving the quality health services provided to mothers and newborns and directing efforts towards rural and semi-urban areas and - Fighting against all forms of violence against women and girls by using artificial intelligence through the investment in improving the functions of the first conversational software robot (ChatBot), named "NajatBot".

On March 12, 2021, UNFM rewards the winner of HRH Princess Lalla Meryem prize for innovation and excellence, for her project selected among several other projects that have benefited from special support from experts in the field of entrepreneurship and finance. This project with a triple social, environmental and financial impact will contribute to the creation of more than 80 jobs, to facilitate the operation of storage and production for nearly 300 small farmers of the locality of Aghbala which produces more than 18,000 tons of apples annually.



Reported by Saida Zniber, UNFM Advisor

■ National Council for Women Societies – Nigeria (NCWS) ■



"Catch Them Young" campaign
at Girls' Secondary School Akwakuma Owerri

In commemoration of International Women's Day (IWD) on March 8th, National Council for Women Societies (NCWS) Nigeria across the 36 states engaged in various programs and activities such as visiting hospitals, Correctional Centers, and distributing relief supplies to women and girls.

In a press release, Dr. Gloria Laraba Shoda, President of NCWS, mentioned the issues on women's leadership and their voice. Below are highlights of her speech:



We can no longer ignore the fact that the Pandemic laid bare existing inequalities in society and exacerbated them. It also exposed the absence of women in governance, while at the same time reinforced the call to address our gender-biased society. The consequences of patriarchy, unequal power relations were also revealed during the pandemic. Male decision-makers were in charge of an issue that disproportionately affected women and girls, exposing gender inequality in our society.

However, we can turn this difficulty into our chance to address the existing gender inequalities during the pandemic. There have been several discussion panels, and debates calling from women's organizations including the National Council for Women's Societies (NCWS) for the government to adopt a gender-responsive approach in the following ways:

- Inclusion of women in decision making processes for better and effective results
- Women's leadership role in all sectors
- Partnerships with women-centered organisations, associations and groups across the 774 local areas for mobilization, collection of data and distribution of palliatives
- Federal and state female lawmakers should place women's issues on the legislative agenda
- Women in executive positions should encourage conversations around the budget review and new appropriations

It is important for women to be in leadership to provide insights and perspectives of women and girls.

< COVID-19 vaccine >

Many countries across the world are experiencing difficulties caused by the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) for several months. Nigeria is not an exception. The number of COVID-19 cases in Nigeria, like many others in Africa, was relatively low in the early months of the pandemic but starting from late November 2020 to March 2021, the number of infections was increased.

After President Muhammadu Buhari had his first COVID-19 vaccine to boost public confidence, Nigeria attempts to inoculate 80 million people this year. Nigeria aims to vaccinate 40 percent of its people this year, and another 30 percent in 2022. However, people in Nigeria hesitate to get the shot as they distrust the government's ability to deliver a coherent plan and they do not know how does the newly procured AstraZeneca vaccine work.

NCWS has embraced the vaccine after president took hers and published it on our platforms. Government is advocating together with civil societies to minimize the fears of the vaccine by putting top officials in line for vaccinations. Some health workers from the hospital have also been vaccinated.

Reported by Gloria Laraba Shoda, President of NCW Nigeria

■ Women's Union of Russia (WUR) ■

For many decades, women's councils have been contributing to the preservation of cultural traditions of respect for the native language, development of children's and family reading. In 2020, the Women's Union

of Russia initiated the campaign, "For the Beauty of the Mother Tongue", successfully in many regions of the country. In February 2021, the campaign results were summed and the winners were honored. Women's councils in 32 regional branches joined the campaign, "For the Beauty of the Mother Tongue". Within the framework of the campaign, various cultural and educational initiatives were implemented: festivals, quizzes, quests, and dictations.

On March 5, the media center, Women's issue, was officially opened in Moscow. Every Wednesday, public and political figures and experts in relevant fields participated in the programs. In a space of a month, 10 programs were released; live broadcasts and their records raised over 4,000 reviews. You can see all programs on [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com).

From March 16 to 26, WUR virtually participated in the UN CSW65 events including the ICW's parallel event. WUR's website regularly published overviews of the discussions.

On March 17-18, Moscow successfully hosted the school of civic activity, "Rural Development: Support Programs and Successful Solutions", which was attended by heads of rural settlements from 30 regions of Russia. Representatives of the Federation Council and the Department of Rural Development of the Ministry of Agriculture presented the following topics: "Current issues of developing rural municipalities" and the state program, "Integrated development of rural areas", its tasks, first results and goals for 2021. Head of the Yaroslavl WUR regional branch introduced the school participants to the project, "Women-housekeepers of the village" successfully implemented in the Yaroslavl region for 5 years. It was decided to extend its positive results to other regions.

On March 24, 25 and 26, 2021, Omsk (Western Siberia) hosted WUR's field school of civic activity. A delegation from 10 regions of Russia, came together to study on the site the mechanisms of collaboration between government authorities, the public and small businesses, as well as social initiatives promoted by the Center for Social Innovations to increase women's business and civic activity. During the interactive training program, "Fundamentals of social entrepreneurship", attendees closely participated in group work to find resources for organizing activities and social projects.



On March 25, the Bureau of the Women's Union of Russia held an online meeting to summarize the results of the organization's work for the first three months of the year. Ekaterina Lakhova, Chair of the Women's Union of Russia, conducted the meeting. At the meeting, Ekaterina Lakhova reported on WUR preparations for the Third Eurasian Women's Forum to be held in St. Petersburg on October 13-15, 2021, where the Women's Union of Russia will organize a discussion panel with the theme of "National Strategy for the

Advancement of Women". She informed that in the framework of the Women's Face of Victory campaign, Aeroflot Russian Airlines accepted the proposal to name one of the airplanes after Valentina Grizodubova, the first chair of the Anti-Fascist Committee of Soviet Women and the famous pilot. In 2020, several brochures announced the dedication of Valentina Grizodubova. This work will continue in 2021.

The Bureau members discussed plans related to the 80th anniversary of the Anti-Fascist Committee of Soviet Women, succeeded by the Women's Union of Russia.

Reported by Helena Bashun, Secretary of Women's Union of Russia

■ National Council of Women of Taiwan ■

In January and February 2021, the National Council of Women of Taiwan, R.O.C. (NCWT) held two meetings of the new board on January and February 2021, electing the new leadership team: Regina Chen and Ping Lee were elected as 1st and 2nd Vice-Presidents, respectively,



Marianne Chao, Margaret Kuo, Hui-Ming Luo, and Vivienne Shen as Executive Board Members and Rui Ying Jao as Executive Supervisor. It is an honor for me to be reelected as President of this wonderful organization and I look forward to working with the board members to harness the energy and capabilities of their women's organizations to work for progress toward women's empowerment, gender equality and the achievement of sustainable development goals. At the second meeting, the board determined the area of responsibility each board member.



The saying "Every cloud has a silver lining" applies to the United Nations CSW 65. Although the event could only be held virtually this year, the silver lining showed up in the number of participants reaching above 25,000. Among them were NCWT members who had the opportunity to participate for the first time as speakers, moderators and audience at various NGO parallel events and to meet other activists from around the world. The events in which NCWT members joined covered topics of violence against women

and girls, women's leadership in politics and economics marginalized women and the role of NGOs/NPOs. NCWT looks forward to this experience planting a seed that mobilizes its members to step up efforts toward the achievement of gender equality, women's empowerment and all the other sustainable development goals despite the changes in the world brought about by the COVID pandemic.

Reported by Linda Liu, President of NCW Taiwan

■ National Council of Turkish Women (NCTW) ■

The COVID-19 pandemic recovery measures taken to protect public health have had serious social and economic effects on women in Turkish society. Primary areas of concern are unemployment, increase burden of unpaid care, and domestic violence. Working at home, as well as psychological stress and economic difficulties led to an increase in the number of domestic violence cases.

Turkey's recent withdrawal from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the Istanbul Convention, which Turkey was the first country to ratify, draws criticism from every social fraction countrywide. We, the National Council of Turkish Women, cannot tell how disappointed and sad we are that this occurred. Despite the recent political preference, we will continue to do our utmost now to make sure it achieves our aim.

On behalf of NCTW, President Fatma Fatoş İnal wrote a press release on Istanbul Convention. We highly appreciate the issue of statements from UN Women, Council of Europe and European Union, on Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. NCTW is grateful to ICW, ECICW, EWL and to all friends from various countries of the world who support us in our protest. Women Associations will take a legal action.



NCTW's protest to urge president to reconsider Turkish withdrawal from Istanbul Convention

After 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence (November 25 to December 10, 2020), NCTW and its branches campaigned and took action to orange the World. NCTW distributed the videos and statement of Phumzile Mlambo Ngucka (Executive Director of UN Women) to our sisters in Turkey. As having difficulty to carry out face-to-face meeting due to the pandemic, NCTW held two virtual meetings with its branches. With the Women's Federation, NCTW is running an emergency hotline to protect victims of violence against women. NCTW joined all events of ICW during the UN CSW65. Notes of sessions were distributed to NCTW branches.

Reported by Fatma Fatos Inal, President of NCTW

Condolences



Judith Ann Parker AM, former President of NCW Australia and ICW-CIF board member (2003-2009), passed away on April 10 2021. She has been an activist for the rights of women and children over a period of 50 years. Judith Parker was responsible for hosting ICW-CIF General Assembly in Perth, Australia in 2003. She was then elected to the ICW-CIF board. She was also considered as an expert in many matters in particular in developing projects. She will be always remembered by us for her dedicated contribution to women and human rights. May she rest in peace.

Upcoming Events

◆ ICW-CIF Virtual Board Meeting

- **Date :** 20 July, 2021

◆ 2022 ICW-CIF General Assembly

- **Date :** 16-22 May, 2022
- **Venue :** Avignon, France





The International Council of Women is...

the first truly global women's NGO which was founded in 1888 for the advancement of women all over the world. Over the past 133 years, the International Council of Women has remained an active pioneer in promoting international women's rights. ICW-CIF was there when the United Nations was formed to make sure the United Nations Charter included women's equal rights and the Commission on the Status of Women be established. It was there when the International Women's Year was proclaimed in 1975. It has been there through the United Nations Decade for Women and four world conferences, including the Beijing Conference of 1995 and Beijing+25. It will continue to be there, representing women's voice and promoting and protecting international human rights of women to make the world a safer and happier place for women.

***Join International Council of Women,
and join us in changing women's lives for better
everywhere in the world.***



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