

Report on the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in March 2013 at the United Nations, New York

Report of the 2013 Commission on the Status of Women

A. The Commission on the Status of Women

Following the 1945 founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco, the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established on 21 June 1946. CSW started life as a subgroup of the newly-functioning Commission on Human Rights. Shortly after, the CSW was raised from status as a subgroup of the Commission on Human Rights to independent and equal status with the Commission on Human Rights. Comprised of eighteen members, it was the only all-women organization in the UN.

The mandate of the CSW, a functional commission of the United Nations, is to “evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment worldwide.” The CSW reaffirms and updates the way in which governmental policy and practice function positively in all areas of endeavor concerning women, and initiates new and increasingly productive ways of advancing women’s and (recently extended to include) girls’ rights, well-being, and status worldwide. (It merits mentioning here that the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (4WCW) in 1995 was the first global meeting that singled out the girl-child as a discrete category for special protection.)

The CSW consistently and strongly condemns all forms of violence against women and girls. It recognizes that all human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent, and emphasizes that all UN member states, being duly respectful of rule of law and of cultural and traditional *mores*, not in any way invoke culture or tradition for an action that would cause a breach of international legal obligations. As stated by Michele Bachelet, former head of UN Woman, at the closing of the CSW Session in March 2013: “... We also know that culture and religion can never be invoked to justify violence against women and girls...”

Further, CSW makes recommendations on urgent problems requiring immediate attention. CSW’s recommendations and reports are presented to

its superior body, the Economic and Social Council, one of the six major organs of the UN.

B. UN Antecedents

Historically, the language in the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and all the human rights documents that followed, are firmly anchored in the concrete and unchangeable concept of non-discrimination and the “equal rights of men and women...” Civil society and nation states are constantly reminded that the premise of those documents is straightforward; every human being is entitled to not be subjected to discrimination, irrespective of “race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

Drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (UDHR or the Declaration) also insured to the extent possible that the language of the Declaration, the major formulation of universal rights principles that then and now guides human rights policy and practice worldwide, would be gender-neutral, differing from popular language’s use of the “rights of man.” The UDHR assures “everyone,” “every person,” and all “human beings” equality of rights, eschewing as much as possible linguistic use of the generic “man,” a gender-preferential grammatical custom of the time.

At the 57th Session of CSW’s annual two-week session in March 2013, representatives of the 45 member states of the CSW met formally at UN headquarters in New York City. In addition, over six thousand women and men from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) held parallel meetings throughout the Session, as is the custom at UN global conferences.

C. The Report

This Report is based on first-hand impressions of NGO Workshops during the first week of the two-week Session.* It includes also reportage of relevant statements and events that took place after CSW sessions, in order to note recent developments of significance to issues considered at CSW 2013.

The Report does not attempt to produce a seamless narrative. Rather, it seeks to capture the clarity of focus, the broadened linkage of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural issues involving women and girls, the

intellectual energy of participants, and the enthusiasm of a 3-ring circus, all rolled into one.

Economic shortcomings of women gained renewed focus; the CSW recognized that women's poverty and lack of empowerment, as well as marginalization resulting from exclusion from a wide range of social and economic policies and from the benefits of education and sustainable development, can place women and girls at increased risk of violence. Linking two previously divergent concepts, the CSW declared that violence against women impedes the social and economic development of societies.

In recent years, CSW affirmed the commitments concerning violence against women and girls that were laid out in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (2002). One hundred twenty five countries have ratified the ICC's Rome Statute. The United States of America is one of the dwindling number of countries that have not ratified the Statute.

CSW pointed to the inclusion in the Rome Statute of gender-related crimes and crimes of sexual violence, as well as recognition by the two International Criminal Tribunals, one for the former Yugoslavia and one for Rwanda, that rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, or a constitutive act with respect to genocide or torture. It also recognized the contribution of the *ad hoc* international tribunals to ending impunity by ensuring accountability and punishing perpetrators of violence against women.

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon had earlier established the office of Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Zainab Hawa Bangura, former Minister of Health and Sanitation of Sierra Leone, was appointed in June 2012 to build capacities to investigate sexual violence; train magistrates to prosecute these sexual violence crimes; help countries build legal frameworks; address impunity and justice for victims; protect and empower affected women; strengthen the political will for implementing Security Council resolutions; coordinate the response of the international community to sexual violence; understand rape as a tactic of war; and encourage local and national ownership of the problem and its solution. "Sexual violence in conflict needs to be treated as the war crime that it is," Bangura said. "It can no longer be written off or treated as an unfortunate collateral damage of war or unavoidable byproduct of political strife."

*N.B.: The Women's International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF), an NGO in consultative status with the UN via ECOSOC, helped facilitate six WILPF members' participation as delegates to the CSW for one week. As one of the six, I was honored to be a delegate, and I offer my appreciation for this opportunity.

Recommended Publications:

Gender Report Card on the International Criminal Court – Special Edition 2012. Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice. www.iccwomen.org

D. Women in the World Then and Now – Recollections

I. Then: 1946

- ~ The Commission on the Status of Women is inaugurated.
- ~ The right to vote is far from universal [while]
- ~ Violence against women is universal, in both the public and private spheres, in peace and in war.
- ~ The UN and its member states are represented predominantly by men.
- ~ The UN organization has an unspoken patriarchal culture, with gender-bias inherent in its internal workings.
- ~ Discussions do not routinely take place in international meetings on women's rights with regard to the traditional practice known as female genital mutilation, or on rape, gender-based violence, or sex trafficking.
- ~ Rape is considered a private act involving sexual drive or lust mainly by men in relation to women.
- ~ Sexual orientation including lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender practices are not included for protection under the basic human right to non-discrimination.

Consider the “status of women” in the post-World War II years when the UN had just been founded. Eleanor Roosevelt's authority for her appointment as the first Chair of the Commission on Human Rights arose from the United Nations Charter of 1945 that, for the first time in any binding international treaty, declared rights for “all without distinction as to race, SEX, language, or religion...” Art 1(3). [*emphasis added*] There was not yet a Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), exactly the task that Roosevelt (widow of President Franklin D. Roosevelt) was dispatched to Geneva to bring about. Nor was there yet the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In

the early days of the UN, when women's human rights infrequently made their way onto an agenda, those rare occurrences could be attributed more to the charitable sense of *noblesse oblige* on the part of privileged males than to states' requisite fulfillment of treaty language calling for equal rights for men and women.

II. 1970s - 2012

At UN global meetings in Geneva in the 70s, New York in the 80s, and Vienna and China in the 90s, agenda items relating to women were occasionally but uncomfortably shoe-horned onto agendas of UN human rights bodies other than the Commission on the Status of Women and the then-Commission on Human Rights (replaced by the Human Rights Council in 2006). And just as the subject matter of CSW has expanded horizontally and vertically over the years, so has its role as a meeting-place and testing ground for the exposure of issues involving violence in relation to women's bodies, women's rights and women's economic well-being as integral parts of the discussion of advancing women's status in the world.

Hillary Clinton, then First Lady of the US, famously stated to NGOs gathered at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (4WCW) in China in 1995: "Women's rights are human rights, and human rights are women's rights." NGOs nodded their heads and said "Of course. Everyone knows that." But around the world at that time, that simple statement was not an accepted principle. It was neither accepted nor acceptable to many peoples, political parties, societies, governments, cultures and religions.

At that same 4WCW in 1995, forty thousand NGOs voted that preventing and eliminating violence against women was the number-one priority everywhere in the world. In 2013, that top priority still remains the highest-ranking demand of women the world over. Significantly, however, this year's CSW took a bold step forward, as it continued to make clear that violence against women goes well beyond physical acts of brutality. The status of the crime of rape, for example, has gone from being considered a private act of passion to being considered an illegal act of violence that may be subject to punishment as a crime against humanity. The linkages between violence and economic disempowerment have, similarly, become evident and actionable.

III. Now: 2013

The organizing theme for this year's CSW was "the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls." CSW identified two basic documents as its touchstone for all proceedings of the CSW, for governments and NGOs alike.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is one of the two framework documents used as a core authority during the session. The second is the Beijing Platform for Action, the final outcome document of the UN 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.

A creative pairing indeed, one might think: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is a legally-binding treaty that has been ratified by and is in force in 187 countries. The U.S. is one of only seven countries that have not ratified it. The Beijing Platform for Action (PfA), on the other hand, is not legally-binding. It is the final outcome document of the UN 4WCW, and as such, has the limited authority of a UN declaration. Conference outcome documents are often in the form of declarations that draw much of their authority from their status as public documents that broadcast the needs, desires, and aspirations voiced at the conclusion of a global meeting.

Each year, during the two weeks of the CSW session, hundreds of participating NGOs focus on presenting their public programs and learning about the programs of other NGOs and the UN. They study first-hand the goals, work, influence, and impact of each group in their home countries and in other locations including at the UN. Their research analyses are publicly aired and may in time be adopted by CSW or used in other UN agencies' work.

Speakers from NGOs this year courageously spoke out about violence as experienced by many of them in the context of violations of economic, social, and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights. That includes violence against women caused by unemployment, unsustainable development, environmental degradation, toxicity of basic resources such as water, as well as discrimination with respect to old age and to disabilities both visible and invisible.

Panelists throughout the hundreds of NGO meetings brought clarity, focus, and coherence to the necessity for research and analysis on violence

in the broader contexts of sustainable development, ecology, desertification, natural disasters like tsunamis, unnatural disasters like the nuclear meltdown in Fukushima, climate change, and global warming, among others.

Before closing the 57th Session, CSW looked ahead a few years and decided that the 60th Session would have as its priority theme: “Women’s Empowerment and the Link to Sustainable Development.”

E. Overview of Some Workshops

I. Violence Against Women

When laws and policies limit women’s freedoms or value women as ‘complementary to’ instead of ‘equal to’ men, this trickles down to problematic perceptions of women’s and girls’ role in society and undermines their safety and security within the State. It is the responsibility of government to create an environment that makes possible the effective prevention of violence against women and girls under any and all circumstances.

CSW affirmed that violence against women and girls is rooted in historical and structural inequality between women and men, and that in every country it is pervasively destructive to the enjoyment of human rights. Gender-based violence is a form of discrimination that seriously violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Violence against women and girls is characterized by the use of power and control in public and private spheres, and is intrinsically linked to gender stereotypes that underlie and perpetuate acts of violence.

Further, it is critical to ensure the inclusion of women and girls of all social strata with disabilities including physical, sensory, learning, and psycho-social disabilities, as well as those living with HIV, those who have violence directed towards them based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity, women in prostitution, older women, widows, and indigenous and migrant women and girls.

Here, in random order, are comments on a few CSW workshops that dealt with violence against women:

From Acceptance to Resistance: Changing Attitudes Surrounding Violence Against Women. UNA-USA's UNA Women, led by Alice Dahle, Charlotte Bunch, Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University, and Karen Mulhauser, UNA-USA National Capital Area, talked about Security Council Resolution 1325 as part of an evolving infrastructure of awareness that affects females from birth; also, about the importance attributed to the boy-child, sometimes called "son preference." Other panelists were Pablo Castillo Diaz, Protection Analyst, UN Women; Margaret Owen, Barrister and Founding President of Widows for Peace through Democracy; and Indai Sajor, international specialist in areas including gender, governance, conflict and human rights. The presentations included global NGOs looking at the issue of violence against women from broader points of departure than in the past. Rape, for example, is not one simple crime; it involves abduction, mistreatment, threat to the life and well-being of the abducted females, and life-long physical and psychological damage. Reporting violent acts to government authorities such as the police is often problematic for the victims. Other community-based forms of justice systems – native courts and tribal courts, for example - may prove useful.

Violence Against Women – the Lethal Consequences of Arms; jointly sponsored by WILPF of Sweden, Costa Rica, Colombia, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. WILPF Secretary General Madeleine Rees presented the WILPF perspective.

Gender-based Non-State Torture. A Canadian team based in Nova Scotia and headed by Jeanne Sarson and Linda MacDonald, both nurses, scholars, and activists working to end gender-based non-state private torture of women, including prostitutes. The focus is on prevention and punishment of acts perpetrated by family members, spouses, guardians, pimps, human traffickers, and pornographers, among other non-state actors.
www.nonstatetorture.org

Violence Against Women *in rete contro la violenza* – D.I.Re – Women's Network against Violence, Rome, Italy. Maintains 63 women's shelters throughout Italy; submits shadow reports to the UN Committee on CEDAW. www.direcontroaviolenza.it

Survivors of violence against women, and initiatives for the prevention of violence against women and girls in Sub-Saharan Africa - Women [sic] Consortium of Nigeria, in collaboration with Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, Abuja, Nigeria

Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls in Asia-Pacific. Workshop of the Republic of Korea Ministry of Gender Equality & Family. Topics: Prevalence of violence against women; sexual harassment in work places as well as in conflict situations; institutionalized Female Genital Mutilation; forced marriage; school assaults; bullying; acid attacks.

Rape in Egypt Workshop. Rape is gender-based violence; burden of proof is often on the victim. Support groups are essential. Very moving testimony was read aloud. The Egyptian NGO plans to request a visit to Egypt from UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Rashida Manjoo. A Representative from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights spoke, offering a helpful strategic suggestion: “Speak about political violence rather than sexual harassment, in presenting your case.”

Sociologists for Women in Society – “Feminist Responses to Violence Against Women and Girls:” “From the State to the Community – Political Practices to Challenge Violence Against Women and Girls” and “Violence against Latina Immigrants in the U.S.” www.socwomen.org

Educate Yourself and Others About Rights Regarding Domestic Violence Asian Pacific Islander Community in San Francisco and Alameda County has legal resources, police protection, medical help.

Stop violence Against Women The Advocates for Human Rights offers legal resources with educational modules on Legislation and Justice in collaboration with the UN. Establishes official channels of accountability on international standards. In 1989, authored *The Manual on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-Legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions*, adopted by the United Nations as the “Minnesota Protocol.” Minneapolis, Minnesota
<http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org>

Stop the Cycle – Strategies to Prevent Violence Against Girls
International Council of Jewish Women and Armenian Relief Society.

Mental Health Implications of Violence against Women and Girls
World Federation for Mental Health. www.wfmh.org

Islamic Day for Anti-Violence Against Women Al-Hakim
Foundation in Baghdad

Women Standing Up to Violence: Women's Federation for World
Peace International, with offices in Nepal, USA, Ethiopia, India.
www.worecnepal.org

Violence Against Women and the Girl Child. Catholic Women's
League of Australia, Eagle Forum, et al.

After the close of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, and looking ahead to the Post-2015 Development Agenda presently being elaborated at the UN, ending violence against women should continue to be an important target, with appropriate indicators on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

Recommended Publications:

- 1) Victories over Violence – Ensuring Safety for Women and Girls, A Practitioner's Manual Mahnaz Afkhami and Haleh Vaziri (2012). Women's Learning Partnership
- 2) Maximum Available Resources & Human Rights
Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University, New Jersey
- 3) NGO CSW Outcome document for North America – An open discussion paper on Violence Against Women and Girls (Draft One – 6 February 2013) NGO preparatory document for CSW 2013. ECOSOC document E/2013/27; CSW document E/2013/27.
- 4) Maximum Available Resources & Human Rights – Analytical Report.
Balakrishnan, Elson, Heintz, Lusiani – Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University 2012?
- 5) Women's Major Group - Creating a Just & Sustainable Future - Position Paper. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Post-2015 Development Agenda.

- 6) Feminists Confronting Unsustainable Development. members WEDO, WECF, DAWN, and GFC. eleonor@wedo.org
- 7) *Domestic Violence against Women Report*, European Commission, 2010.
- 8) http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_344_en.pdf.
- 9) *National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010. 10) http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/NISVS_Report2010--a.pdf.
- 11) Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur, *Violence against women, its causes and consequences* (1994-2009), United Nations, 2009.
- 12) Security Council Resolution 2106 - S/RES/2106 (2013) 24 June 2013. Comprehensive; substantive; reprises history of gender-based violation against women and girls.
- 13) Domestic Violence against Women Report European Commission 2010.
http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_344_en.pdf.
- 14) National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010. http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/NISVS_Report2010-a.pdf.

II. Trafficking

Trafficking is internationally recognized as a transnational organized crime. The overall topic of ‘trafficking’ at local, national, and international levels, in relation to drugs, to labor, to women, and to sex, was addressed in various workshops. Included in this collaboration were exchanges of information on best practices of governments at all levels, as well as of NGOs. NGOs collaborating with each other, the UN, and individual governments, seek to strengthen international cooperation, consolidate existing mechanisms and initiatives, and go on to develop new mechanisms and initiatives consistent with the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2003) and its supplementary Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children (Trafficking Protocol). By August

2013, the Convention had been ratified by 177 states. It is also called the Palermo Convention, and has three protocols (the Palermo Protocols):

- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children;
- Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.
- Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms

The comprehensive and very substantive “Outcome Document - Agreed Conclusions CSW 57” of 19 March 2013 declares with respect to human trafficking:

...Take appropriate measures to address the root factors, including external factors that contribute to trafficking in women and girls. Prevent, combat and eliminate trafficking in women and girls by criminalizing all forms of trafficking in persons, in particular for the purpose of sexual and economic exploitation, as well as by strengthening existing civil and criminal legislation with a view to providing better protection of the rights of women and girls and by bringing to justice and punishing the offenders and intermediaries involved, including public officials, by protecting the rights of trafficked persons and preventing revictimization. Take appropriate measures to ensure that identified victims of trafficking in persons are not penalized for having been trafficked. Provide identified victims of trafficking appropriate protection and care, such as rehabilitation and reintegration in society, witness protection, job training, legal assistance, confidential health care, and repatriation with the informed consent of the trafficked person, regardless of their participation in any legal proceeding. Accelerate public awareness, education and training to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation;

Some workshops on this topic:

UNICEF – Trafficking is seen as a global practice whose target is financial profit from selling human beings. Neal Kelly, representative of the UNICEF Committee to Stop Trafficking in Persons, described having used a criminal justice methodological approach. Currently, however, Kelly said that his approach to work on trafficking now includes the use of human rights treaty requirements.

Avenues to Accountability: Symposium on Militarism, Trafficking, Exploitation and Justice. Now, thirteen years after what was celebrated as a ground-breaking action by the Security Council (SC) in 2000 when it formally called for women's equal participation under SC Resolution 1325, there is relatively little to show for it. The workshop reiterated the importance of more thoroughly utilizing the potential that lies in Security Council resolutions that incorporate gender language, as a means of moving decisions into action.

The important film that was shown, "The Whistleblower," concerns a UN policewoman (Madeleine Rees in reality; see WILPF entries) who stumbles into the sordid world of Balkan sex trafficking, and finds her fellow UN peacekeepers implicated. www.peacewomen.org

Rees – in person - based her presentation on first-hand knowledge of the genocidal horror that Bosnian women experienced. Yet, knowing that, Rees went on to say that Bosnia was not in fact the only country to go through the worst of the worst. Rees spoke of "cognitive dissonance," the gap between the pledges and laws that national governments make on behalf of women's rights, and the meager implementation of both. Cognitive dissonance is evident when, to quote Rees: "...States send their trade delegations to negotiate the Arms Trade Treaty, [and] they have no idea what gender-based violence would have to do with it." Criteria for the Arms Trade Treaty should ensure that the sale of arms is prevented when it is known that gender-based violence is occurring in the recipient society.

Forming strategies based on the inevitable linkages between such issues as the Arms Trade Treaty and gender-based violence is a tortuous but necessary road for women's rights and peace movements to take. Indeed, why not attempt to interject language on human rights into the Arms Trade Treaty preamble, for example? Indeed, why not use the string of Security Council resolutions that are there for the taking. Work needs to be done more specifically with resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), and 1960 (2010).

The best-known resolution is 1325 (2000), designed to ensure the inclusion of women in peace-building efforts and protect them before, during, and after conflict. Security Council Resolution 1820 was the first resolution to recognize sexual violations as a tool of war.

Sexual violence is not opportunistic; it has become a regular feature of war, and must be dealt with as such. Indeed, WILPF's statement at the end of the 57th CSW speaks of WILPF's call for a "strong [Arms Trade Treaty] text that includes legally-binding gender provisions. "

Born Free...Sold into Bondage. Berhane Raswork UFER
Representative at UN-Geneva; Raymonde Martineau, S-G UFER

Holding the DSKs, Elliot Spitzers and Berlusconi's Accountable. The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women works on several continents, to end impunity.

Canadian Women's Foundation – works to stop sexual trafficking.

Prostitution and Sex Trafficking Good Shepherd International Justice Peace Office: Survivors Speak.

Why Are Policies on Prostitution Important to Combat Violence Against Women? Workshop by ROKS, the National Organisation for Women's Shelters and Young Women's Shelters in Sweden, with prominent speakers from Sweden, France, Iceland, and the EU.

Recommended Publications:

- 1) Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act. President Obama signed on 7 March 2013. <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/s47/text>
- 2) 2010 Annual "Trafficking in Persons Report" 177 countries hold U.S. to standards; efforts at prevention, protection and prosecution. Mentions U.S. Department of State Report: Human Trafficking on p.104.
- 3) 22 USC section 7102 <http://media.ca8.uscourts.gov/> on sex trafficking
- 4) President's Inter-Agency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Human Trafficking

III. Other NGO Workshops

Human Security: The Missing Link Between Women's Rights, Conflict, and Peace, co-sponsored by WILPF and The Women's Learning Partnership (WLP). WLP, a major NGO, has a program of twenty autonomous organizations in the Global South's primarily Muslim-majority countries, training women for leadership. The keynoter was Zainab Hawa

Bangura of Sierra Leone, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Madeleine Rees, Secretary General of WILPF, addressed the interrelationship of rights, conflict, and peace, a linkage that calls for increasing attention in the 21st century. A cogent argument was made for putting security at the top of the metaphorical pyramid, something that is too often omitted in work connecting women, conflict, and peace. Speakers included Mahnaz Afkhami, former Minister for Women's Affairs in Iran; Asma Khader of Jordan, Independent Investigator on Human Rights Abuses in Libya for the UN Human Rights Council; and El-Shafie of Egypt, who spoke on the Forum for Women in Development.

Children's Parliament Lakshmi Gayathri-Theni, a teen-ager from India, said that the Children's Parliament opened new horizons for her. She spoke on behalf of children forced into marriage when still children. Being blind, she read her well-documented speech from a Braille text.

Women's Health and Medical Care
Freedom from Fistula Foundation (Malawi, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Ethiopia, Liberia, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia); health care during and after childbirth, with focus on healing fistulas.

Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Priorities are Core to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Post-2015 Development Agenda Position Paper of the NGO Women's Major Group, October 2010.

The Report on the Status of Women and Girls in California With the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, Actor Geena Davis, Chair. Mount St. Mary's College, Los Angeles, CA.

Educate Yourself, Advocate, Spread the Word. UNA-USA Campus Advocates

Double Bind: The Muslim Right, the Anglo-American Left and Universal Human Rights Centre for Secular Space (thinktank)
www.lulu.com

Men as Part of the Solution in the Elimination of Violence Against Women Ambassador Henry MacDonald, Mission of Suriname. National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the US.

The Men's Story Project: Building Strength, Creating Peace.
Also: Fostering Critical Public Dialogue on Masculinities, Health and Justice. The Men's Story Project: Policies, strategies, programs to promote the responsibility of men and boys to become strategic allies in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls; encourage increased understanding; adopt behaviors based on gender equality and respectful relationships; provide positive role models for gender equality. www.mensstoryproject.org

Recommended Publications:

- 1) Leading to Action – A Political Participation Handbook for Women Mahnaz Afkhami and Ann Eisenberg, (2010).
- 2) Women, Peace and Security Handbook: Compilation and Analysis of United Nations Security Council Resolution Language 2000-210. 3) PeaceWomen Project of WILPF; Maria Butler, Kristina Mader, and Rachel Kean, October 2010.
- 4 Breaking Barriers – Final Report. Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, University of San Diego (2012)

IV. Other CSW Activities

International Women's Day – 8 March

Several separate marches through the streets of mid-Manhattan were spontaneously arranged by different NGOs on the 8th of March, in celebration of International Women's Day. The marches variously called on governments to take concrete steps to end impunity and to support gender equality and human rights rather than militarism. Women human rights defenders were singled out as a category facing particular risks both because of their gender and because of the nature of their work. Governments were called on to ensure that women and girls are enabled to act without fear of reprisals, coercion, intimidation or attacks, including through integration of a gender perspective in all relevant policies and programs.

On a positive note, President Obama signed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (VAWA) on the 8th of March, International Women's Day, which coincides each March with the CSW Session,

UN Women

Three years ago, the UN General Assembly created a new composite entity - UN Women - to strengthen the institutional arrangements for support of “Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women” (A/64/L.56 of 30 June 2010). UN Women was operational on 1 January 2011. UN Women addresses discrimination and violence against women and girls at global, regional and national levels, and assists States, upon their request, in their efforts to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against women and girls. UN Women consolidates four existing UN bodies :

- ~ UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM),
- ~ Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW),
- ~ Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues,
- ~ UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

Michelle Bachelet, former President of Chile, was appointed as the first Executive Director of UN Women and Under-Secretary-General by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. During her tenure, Bachelet’s notable public remarks included:

“... We know, for instance, that women who face multiple forms of discrimination are particularly vulnerable to violence, including specific forms such as economic violence and racism. Such groups include women living with disabilities, women living with HIV and AIDS, indigenous women, migrant women, adolescent girls and older women, among others. These groups are too often invisible, and it is crucial that laws and policies have special provisions that take into account their needs and rights...”

At the close of the 57th Session, Bachelet said:

“There can be no peace, no progress as long as there is discrimination and violence against women. There is no turning back.” Bachelet concluded her presentation by announcing somewhat unexpectedly that she was stepping down from her position, and would be returning to Chile, possibly to be a candidate once again for President. Susan

E. Rice, U.S. ambassador to the UN, credited Bachelet with "preventing the collapse of the women's rights conference" for the consensus statement condemning violence against women and underscoring women's sexual reproductive health rights." (Foreign Policy, 15 March 2013)

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka of South Africa replaced Bachelet as the new Executive Director of UN Women in July 2013. Mlambo-Ngcuka was the first woman to serve as Deputy President of South Africa, 2005 to 2008, and has an estimable history of high-level public service.

Recommended Publications:

- 1) "Outcome Document - Agreed Conclusions CSW 57." Commission on the Status of Women. Report on the fifty-seventh session (4-15 March 2013) E/2013/27; E/CN.6/2013/11
- 2) "Increasing Women's Access to Justice in Post-Conflict Societies," Michelle Bachelet; UN Chronicle Volume XLIX-Number 4-2012, pp. 16-18.

F. Global to Local: A Model to Duplicate

The CSW states that “...all States have the obligation, **at all levels** [*emphasis added*], to use all appropriate means of a legislative, political, economic, social and administrative nature in order to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls...”

Two California cities have fulfilled that goal, despite the fact that the US has not yet ratified CEDAW in spite of Senate hearings on ratification since 1994. Prior to the 2013 CSW, two California cities -- San Francisco and Berkeley -- had independently created new municipal law derived from CEDAW into each of the two cities' municipal laws. This brought CEDAW's global principles on women's rights into force, unusually, at the local level.

The San Francisco Department on the Status of Women, headed by Executive Director Emily Murase, deploys gender analysis to review the services and budget of city agencies.

Both cities' relevant legislative implementation documents are listed below. Readers interested in similarly incorporating the principles of CEDAW into municipal law in cities other than San Francisco and Berkeley are encouraged to check out both cities' models below. For further details, please email <maranrita@gmail.com> and reference this article.

Recommended Publications:

1) San Francisco Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 1021-97, November 10, 1997, supporting local implementation of the underlying principles of CEDAW and urging the U.S. Senate to ratify CEDAW. Mayor Willie Brown approved Resolution No. 1021-97 on November 17, 1997.

2) Berkeley Ordinance 7,224-N.S. of 17 March 2012 added Chapter 13.20, "Adopting the Operative Principles of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," to the Berkeley Municipal Code.

G. After the CSW:

National Action Plans (NAP), and the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2013 (WPS Act)

Building on the unanimous adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000, nations are creating National Action Plans (NAP) as a common tool to spur more effective implementation of this resolution.

In the U.S. on 31 July 2013, the Women, Peace, and Security Act (WPS Act) of 2013 was re-introduced in the House of Representatives. The WPS Act will enable Congress to ensure that the United States promotes the critical role of women in conflict prevention and peace-building processes; integrates the interests of women into conflict resolution strategies; protects women and girls from gender-based violence, including sexual assault; and ensures women and girls have equal access to humanitarian assistance (food, healthcare, shelter) during situations of crisis and conflict. It was originally enacted in December 2011 by Executive Order of President Obama.

The WPS Act will serve to codify the U.S. National Action Plan, which makes the engagement and protection of women as agents of peace and security an administrative policy:

prosperous when
opportunity...

“...countries are more peaceful and women are accorded full and equal rights and opportunity...”

Since the U.S. NAP was enacted as an Executive Order of the President, its lifespan is only as long as the current administration. However, the WPS Act will allow this policy to continue as law beyond the duration of the Obama Administration.

Recommended Publications:

1) http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/email-files/US_National_Action_Plan_on_Women_Peace_and_Security.pdf

2) “It’s A Girl” Women’s Rights Without Frontiers. www.itsagirlmovie.com

3) Report of the Civil Society Consultations on the Development of the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (UN SCR 1325). WILPF-U.S. Section, Boston, MA 10 Dec. 2011 www.wilpf.org

4) “Information2Action: Focusing on Girls to Promote Development, Stability, and Security in the Post-2015 Agenda.” Roslyn Warren and Mayesha Alam. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace & Security, July 2013. <giwps.georgetown.edu>

VIII. Wrap-up

A factor likely to have been on participants’ minds during the 57th Session in 2013:

The year before, the 56th Session of the CSW in 2012 had failed to conclude with a final Outcome Document, the usual closing document of any UN conference. That gap was met by a paucity of actions by governments in this field over the past year, a gap that may have partly resulted from the lack of definitive requests coming to governments from the CSW.

Obviating another year of governments’ inactivity, NGOs produced a substantive, far-reaching open platform at the conclusion of CSW 2013. The title is “Agreed conclusions on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.” CSW strongly recommended that the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women be considered a priority in the elaboration of the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda, a major policy undertaking that is currently in preparation in the UN.

Many workshops, like those of WILPF and UNA-USA, brought fresh thinking to the participants’ existing views on eliminating and preventing violence against women and girls. Indeed, many workshops included factual reporting and discussion not only of historical and structural inequalities between men and women, not only the inherent wrongness of discrimination under all circumstances, not only the hard-earned knowledge that violence against women leads to expansion of all forms of violence and weakens rule

of law, but also did so within the context of urgent economic and social development issues including but not limited to combatting climate change, ensuring inclusive economic development, reducing poverty, and assuring inclusivity for older women, widows, women with disabilities, indigenous women, and migrant, minority, and low-income women who face multiple layers of discrimination that add to already-existing risk factors.

Evident at the close of 2013's CSW was the strength of the ongoing struggle to prevent knee-jerk characterizations of issues relating specifically to women as "women's issues - and therefore outside of politics." Indeed not. "Women's issues" are "men's issues," and vice-versa, and both are of critical importance politically and otherwise to women and men alike. It matters as much to women's safety, security, and well-being as it does to men's safety, security, and well-being that the Arms Trade Treaty – to continue this example - is enforced. It matters no less in men's lives than in women's lives that CEDAW is implemented and enforced in all countries.

Late note: Two months after CSW 2013, the Security Council acknowledged its slow implementation of - and reaffirmed its commitment to - its earlier resolutions concerning women, peace, and security. (S/RES/2106 (2013) of 24 June 2013).

Four months later, in October 2013, Security Council Resolution 2122, unanimously adopted, reiterates once again the women's involvement in conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building. Resolution 2122 furnishes a roadmap for "a more systematic approach to the implementation of commitments on women, peace and security." It highlights the critical importance of gender equality and women's empowerment to international peace and security.

The resolution includes concrete measures on the development and deployment of technical expertise for peacekeeping missions and UN mediation teams supporting peace talks; improved access to information and analysis on the

impact of conflict on women and women's participation in conflict resolution in reports and briefings to the security council; and strengthens commitments to consult, as well as include, women in peace talks. It also calls on member states to fund the work of women's leadership, and of local civil society groups involved in conflict prevention and resolution.

The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, established in 2000, the same year that SCR 1325 was adopted, welcomed the Security Council's adoption of Resolution 2122 in 2013. The NGO Working Group has monitored policy and practice on women, peace and security, since its beginnings in New York in 2000. The NGO Group serves as a bridge between women's human rights defenders working in conflict-affected situations, and policy-makers at U.N. Headquarters. The Working Group said in October 2013: "Today's resolution provides an important step... It should be implemented to help ensure women's voices and women's rights are fundamental, not incidental, to the Council's daily work."

The new Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, briefed the Security Council. Resolution 2122 recognises that "gender equality and the empowerment of women are critical to international peace and security," said Mlambo-Ngcuka. A member of the Femmes Africa Solidarité board and founder of the Association of Women Jurists of the Central African Republic, Brigitte Balipou, talked about Resolution 2122's key commitments regarding women's participation as they will impact the Council, UN actors, and all those involved in peace processes. In addition, the resolution reminds all UN Member States of the forthcoming 15th anniversary in 2015, identifying that date as a marker for achievements and goals on the core issue of international peace and security. A major review of progress on Resolution 1325 will be held to mark its 15th anniversary in 2015 on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

The importance of women's role in the peace process needs to be emphasized in discussions now underway concerning the UN's Post-2015 Development Agenda that will replace the Millennium Development Goals when they expire in 2015.

The findings of the Secretary-General's 2013 "Report on Women, Peace and Security" were also presented to the Council. "Resolution 2122 demonstrates the security council's intention to put women's leadership at the centre of all efforts to resolve conflict and promote peace. It answers the chorus of voices from the global women's movement to focus on women's roles as peace leaders."