

NGO COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN GENEVA

NGO CSW GENEVA

2019

BUREAU REPORTS



Annual General Meeting
20 April 2020, 1-3pm
NGO Resource Center
Palais des Nations

WWW.NGOCSW-GENEVA.CH

2019 PRESIDENT ANNUAL REPORT

**The 2019 President's Annual Report to the NGO Committee on the Status of Women,
Geneva Annual General Assembly**

20 April 2020

Submitted by Stacy Dry Lara, President



Dear NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva Members:

I would like to thank the Bureau and the members of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva (Committee) for the trust placed in me in 2019. Later in this document, you will find the comprehensive 2019 report from Vice President, Carolyn Handschin, Women's Federation for World Peace International, and the 2019 Treasurer report from Anne Riz, FAWCO. Both, along with Secretary, Clémence Mathiaud, Graduate Women International, and Parliamentarian, Paula Daeppen, Biovision, contributed their professionalism and expertise. I am grateful for their support and always positive demeanour.

Of significance, I would like to honor Simone Ovar, Zonta International, and Krishna Ahooja-Patel, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Both leaders in advancing the rights of women paved the way for women and girls in unique and noteworthy styles. We recognized each in February during a moment of silence, and they remain in our thoughts and admiration.

My work alongside a dedicated Bureau and membership is summarized in four key areas aimed to move the Committee forward and lay the foundation for the future. 1) Bureau Structure; 2) Member Relations; 3) Financials; 4) Advocacy.

1) Bureau Structure: A good Bureau is a balanced team with complementary skill sets and a culture that cultivates teamwork to make the most effective decisions for the Committee. As a team, in January, we found ourselves reeling from the announcement of the early departure of Claudia Williams, LDS Charities, our cherished Secretary. Upon Claudia's resignation, we accelerated identifying her replacement. According to our Bylaws, the Committee is required to operate with a minimum of a President, Secretary and Treasurer. We offered members the Secretary opportunity and circulated a position description. Receiving no volunteers and under the Bureau authority, we were pleased to appoint Clémence Mathiaud, Graduate Women International, as Secretary. My sincere gratitude to the Committee for confirming Clémence's appointment in June.

**NGO Committee on the
Status of Women,
Geneva
Bureau**

President

Graduate Women
International represented
by
Stacy Dry Lara

**Vice President
Membership**

Women's Federation for
World Peace
International
represented by
Carolyn Handschin

Secretary

Graduate Women
International
represented by
Clémence Mathiaud

Treasurer

FAWCO
represented by
Anne Riz

**Committee
Parliamentarian**

Biovision
represented by
Paula Daeppen

The challenges of operating without a Secretary were over, and our Bureau was once again complete. My thanks extend to Clémence for willingly accepting the position and immediately making positive contributions to the Committee. Angela Sauvage, Soroptimist International, resigned as Committee Vice President in April. A 2nd Vice President is not required, and the Bureau decided not to replace her position.

Paula Daeppen continues as our expert Parliamentarian.

I am grateful for the work of each and enjoy immensely working with them on the Committee.

2) Member Relations: For the Bureau, this year was about recalling lessons from the past, listening, and moving into action. We emphasized conveying that our membership organizations, collectively, are integral to the accomplishment of our advocacy work and that fostered and respectful relationships allow us to better emphasize our advocacy.

February, our Committee reacted positively to the idea to hold meetings once again at the United Nations Geneva (UNOG) NGO Resource Center. As non-governmental organizations with United Nations Economic and Social Committee status, our access to the United Nations is valuable. Holding meetings at UNOG puts us in the heart of our advocacy work and proved to increase meeting attendance. This is excellent and has set us on the path to increase membership. Membership engagement is increasing and is critical in 2020, so we can continue this positive momentum.

As promised, the Bureau improved and increased communications with the membership. The Committee also receives more relevant and valued communication from membership. My thanks to all for continuing to share your information for dissemination.

3) Financials: Easy to understand, comprehensive and transparent financial reports are a priority for the Bureau. I thank Anne for the accurate financial statements she gave throughout the year. To this end, we worked together to create a budget with individual line items for advocacy and membership development. Our financial reporting is accurate and straightforward to understand. As additional oversight and in accordance with our Bylaws, an internal auditor was appointed in April. I thank Kristin Reynishottir, Soroptimist International, for generously volunteering to review the financial reports.

In an effort to maintain our financial health and to reduce unnecessary expenditures, in June, the Committee accepted the decision to give notice to vacate the office space at Varembe in Geneva. Though a worthy 7-meter space, the office was rarely used, and the various ideas for increasing its use never took hold within the Committee. Relinquishing the office frees up an additional CHF 6000 annually that can be placed towards our advocacy work, membership development, and relationship building with Geneva leadership.

Important to mention are the discussions held throughout 2019 about the Committee's amount of cash reserves. Numerous ideas on how to best utilize the cash surplus have been presented including offering a fellowship, holding lunches with leadership of Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), UN Women and UNOG, and side events at the Human Rights Council. This engagement is critical, yet we must keep the activities well within the Committee's mission.

4) Advocacy: Collectively, our advocacy has become much more relevant to a global economy yet more sharply targets the emerging root causes of women's and girl's issues. Inspired by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, our Committee's mission calls upon its members to lead in the advancement of women, girls and their rights. We have a space in which actions by the Committee can be instrumental in the creation of equal and just societies.

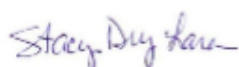
To do this, it is essential for us to participate in critical discussions and decision-making regarding policy development. This means that instead of merely reacting to social and economic policies and their fallout, we must influence policies that are contextual to their countries and safeguard "public goods" like healthcare and safety, education, water and food security, social safety nets. Member organization numerous written and oral statements given to the Human Rights Council and participation in the CEDAW, the UNECE Civil Society Forum and the UNECE Regional Review are prime examples of how we aim to shape national policies and to have a greater impact on the lives of women and girls. I offer special thanks to Valerie Bichelmeier, Make Mothers Matter, and Anne Riz for their hard work and determination to gain funding from the Canton of Geneva for 20 UNECE Regional Review participants who came from Central Asia, Ukraine and Georgia. Additionally, our Bureau and Committee members served on several taskforces to produce Fact Sheets for the UNECE Regional Review on topics such as violence against women, education, economic and social barriers, tax justice or peace and security. Also, important to acknowledge is the "Ending Violence against Women and Girls" side event organized by Mohinder Watson and Brigitte Polonovski, both International Council of Women, and the Council of Europe. The side event was cosponsored by the NGO CSW Geneva, Canadian Mission, French Ministry, NGO CSW and UN Women. These extraordinary things happened because you are all exceptional women.

The Committee's "Women's Mosaic of Lived Experiences" video was featured at the beginning of the Civil Society Forum to the UNECE regional review meeting on Beijing+25 held in October. The video project was an exceptional experience for those on the Committee who participated. Our team collaborated with brilliant, like-minded women from the UNECE to collect video clips about issues women are facing today and what governments and the United Nations should do to alleviate those issues. After months of collecting, viewing and editing video clips the final video came to fruition with the help of young filmmaker and Committee supporter, Julia Handschin. This major achievement was accomplished under the leadership of Valerie Bichelmeier supported by Bureau officers Carolyn Handschin, Clémence Mathiaud, and myself; Committee members Valeriane Bernard, Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University; Carol McConkie, LDS Charities; and Oleksandra Kunovska Mondoux, World Federation of Ukrainian Women.

Consistent presence 2019 has increased our exposure and raised the bar for our engagement in Geneva. One example of this is the 2019 Holiday Lunch held at UNOG Delegate's Restaurant that was attended by most of our Committee. We were pleased to host honored guests, Olga Algayerova Executive Secretary of the United Nations ECE and Lidiya Grigoreva, UNOG NGO Liaison.

Moving forward to 2020, at the time of this publication, the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women slated to highlight the progress of women's issues since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 25 years ago had been, unfortunately, yet understandably, postponed. The substantial amount of preparation by our Committee members is recognized yet not abandoned! The Generation Equality Forums scheduled for Mexico and Paris have also been postponed. This spell of lag time is an opportunity to examine our participation and emerge with a more significant influence on change at local and global levels.

We are all watching our world face an unprecedented public health challenge in the fight against COVID-19. I want you to know that our Committee stands in solidarity with all of you and particularly those who are most vulnerable during uncertain circumstances like this. Although the safety and well-being of everyone requires us to physically separate from one another, the Bureau remains committed to our membership. Through this unprecedented period, we will continue doing what it knows best: raising the voice of graduate women around the world and working for the preservation and improvement of women's and girls' fundamental right to education.



**NGO COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, GENEVA, PRESIDENT,
GRADUATE WOMEN INTERNATIONAL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

2019 VICE-PRESIDENT ANNUAL REPORT

The 2019 Vice- President's Annual Report to the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva Annual General Assembly

20 April 2020

Submitted by Carolyn Handschin, Vice-President

For the NGOCSW Executive Committee, 2019 came in with somber resolve and solidarity. Two of our most formidable and valued senior members, Simone Ovar and Krishna Ahojapatel, had passed on in 2018, and our first meeting of the year convened with moments of prayer and meditation for their long dedication to the advancement of women and the NGOCSW- as well as their friendship.

As a Committee, we realized that we had a momentum to welcome the challenge with a positive outlook. There was strong unity among us and with our president, Stacy Dry Lara. We were often quick to come to consensus and were rather uncomplicated and appreciative of one-another's views - which is so important in committee work.

Although there would be much more to say, this report will be divided into 3 sections:

I. The Development and Membership questionnaire

II. Beijing +25 Review preparations:

a. Civil Society Forum preparations and Working Groups

b. NGOCSW Mosaic Video Project

III. Advocacy at the UN in Geneva: our presence

IV. Conclusion

Following the discussion of the first NGOCSW Geneva Committee (Committee) Meeting of 2019 in February, the Executive Committee members decided to divide several tasks between our Vice Presidents. Carolyn Handschin, Vice President, was to focus on membership and development. Our newly elected, younger, 2nd Vice President would focus on advocacy through the media, which was her professional experience, but she resigned a few months later. Having been an active member of the Committee between 1994 and 2011, and of the Executive Committee during the last 6 years of that period, but absent during recent years, I decided to prepare a questionnaire, which was introduced at the next committee meeting on April 9.

I. The Development and Membership Questionnaire

It began: “Our members all represent active, relevant international NGO’s... experts in our various fields. We do not fully know each-other’s work and expertise – or even one another’s stories. A survey could help us to work better as a team, and tap into the many talents and extensive experience among our members... in order to make the collective NGOCSW more impactful to the work of the UN and strengthened as a trusted partner.”

There were four categories of questions in the survey, each having several questions/subtopics include:

1. Presence
2. Structure
3. Membership
4. Etiquette

The survey was sent to 65 Committee members and former members. Approximately, 20% completed the questionnaire and valuable information was collected. A summary of the valuable data collected for the Committee can be viewed [HERE](#).

NEXT STEPS: Some of these responses have already been acted upon and will continue to be discussed and implemented. Thank you to those who took the time to express your thoughts and excellent advice.

II. Beijing +25 UNECE Regional Review preparations: (some minutes available on our website; ngocsw-geneva.ch)

a. Civil Society Forum Preparations and Working Groups

Following up on the suggestions from the questionnaire, and our executive team’s own conclusions, an opportunity was found with the coming Beijing +25 UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting. Aware of our strengths, and proximity, I arranged a first meeting with the UNECE’s Senior Social Affairs Officer and Gender Focal Point, Malinka Kopránová, on behalf of the Committee. Stacy, Valerie Bichelmeier and I met Malinka in the Delegates Lounge. The discussion revolved about what part civil society, and specifically the Committee might play in the preparations.

Realistic in our capacity and still hopeful for focused on the future, both Valerie and I began joining the regular early Zoom meetings of the Women’s Major Group (WVG) representing the Committee and our own organizations. I attended, often hosted, over 45 Zoom calls related to preparations for the Beijing + 25 CSO event on October 28, 2019, including many for our own committee’s “Mosaic” video project.

We all spent several months convening Zoom meetings with our teams (and supporting other teams) and concluded with a factsheet and recommendations that are posted on many websites and have been offered as a resource to governments. These have been shared not only at the UNECE Regional Prepcom, but also leading up to the planned 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the General Assembly in New York and the Equality Generation events in Mexico and Paris. This research could be built on within our Committee.

As its modus operandi, our team on "Education, Training, Mentoring and Access to Technology" prepared a survey, asking the situation in nations across our region; what has improved and what needs attention, concluding with recommendations to their governments. Thirty responses came back. I cite these details here because it was our own Committee members who were among the most serious in reaching out in their networks to gather this information. Another 5-8 of our Committee members joined various Working Groups and made substantial, expert contributions. Thank you.

b. NGOCSW Mosaic Video Project

The Committee's "Women's Mosaic of Lived Experiences" Mosaic project", which was birthed in one of our Committee meetings was a remarkable opportunity to work closely together as a team and produce quality, concrete results. Our proposal began, "Many women's lives and their communities have been dramatically and constructively influenced by their engagement with the extensive networks of the United Nations: the World Conferences on Women and Beijing Platform for Action...while policy makers increasingly understand the value of local knowledge about- and mobilization for- the goals, most of civil society remains out of reach." The core team of 4 or 5, sometimes expanding to 8, worked diligently under Valerie B.'s able and responsible facilitation spending many hours meeting at the UN and by Zoom throughout the summer. We engaged Julia Handschin, a young filmmaker, to produce the video for us. Working always in a very collegial environment, we reached out to our networks to gather videoclips (not so simple), discussing and re-discussing, editing and finally coming to a consensus. Members who invested much for this can be found at the end of the video, which is on our website. It was finally shown during the opening ceremony of the Beijing + 25 Civil Society Forum on October 28 at the Geneva International Conference Center.

III. Advocacy at the UN in Geneva: our presence

In closing, this report I would like to mention that with reference to the ongoing advocacy and presence at the UN in Geneva, there has been an improvement during this year. There have been statements and side events /parallel events that have been announced during committee meetings, that led to co-sponsorship with other committee members' organizations. Some of those are on our website. Thank you to Stacy and our Secretariat for prioritizing the tedious work of maintaining our website.

There have been several visits to UN agencies and government missions arranged in cooperation among several members for advocacy and awareness raising. That can be planned more often from committee meetings. There has been several (my own experience) public meetings where committee members have been invited to take the floor, as members. I am sure there are others. This too can be increased as we include our NGOCSW affiliation when we identify ourselves (in appropriate circumstances).

IV. CONCLUSION

The experience that we had this year to build our Mosaic project, from the bottom -up is a good model. It began with the desire to contribute to the successful outcomes of the Beijing +25 review. Our shared vision profiled our personality as a committee and our diversity as representatives of international civil society organizations. We had a clear deadline and core, talented, team who was enthusiastic to contribute and generous in offering their time (and money) for the success of the larger project /goal. It was very enjoyable to labor together -and that is important. We were not self-promoting but sought to promote our profile as a relevant organization. This method can be applied in the many public faces and venues where we could have a presence. Project leadership should be shared, so the burden and benefit are also shared.

We all recognize that we are living in a time of global transformation and deep reflection both institutionally and individually. There are- and will be more, openings and gaps to be filled by innovation and leadership. Positive, engaged and mature voices in solidarity, that represent such a vast, constituency (not only the "needs", but the "strengths" of women "for the sake of all humanity") will always be a critical advocacy. I hope we can continue together.



VICE-PRESIDENT, NGO COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, GENEVA