

40 YEARS OF NGO CSW GENEVA **ADVOCACY FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS** **AND GENDER EQUALITY**



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DISCLAIMER

This report has been produced in good faith, based on information available from the NGO CSW Geneva Archives, as well as personal accounts of past and present members, the CoNGO Archives stored at the UN, relevant websites and other sources.

Whilst every effort was taken during the preparation of this report to ensure that all this information was interpreted, represented and quoted correctly, its accuracy nor its completeness can be guaranteed: the NGO CSW Geneva archived information records are unfortunately incomplete and only limited time and resources were available to conduct the research. Therefore the NGO CSW Geneva accepts no responsibility for the completeness and accuracy of the report contents.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

5WCW	5 th World Conference on Women
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)
CoNGO	Conference of Non Governmental Organisations in Consultative Status with the UN
CHR	Commission of Human Rights
CSW	United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HRC	Human Rights Council
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INSTRAW	International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IWY	International Women's Year
IYC	International Year of the Child
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NGO CSW	NGO Committee on the Status of Women
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
POPs	Persistent Organic Pollutants
SCR	Security Council Resolution
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNCTAD	United Nations Commission on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WHO	World Health Organisation
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society

See also the list of Past and Present NGO CSW Geneva Member Organisations for acronyms of NGOs (Appendix 4)

FOREWORD

MESSAGE FROM NGO CSW GENEVA
PRESIDENT

I invite you to journey with us through this 40-years history of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva. This publication is produced on our 40th anniversary to recall our past forty years of advocacy activities and to take stock of our achievements and

contributions towards advancing women's human rights and gender equality.

We share with you this story at a pivotal moment in the development history and the advancement of gender equality within the United Nations. We are at the moment when the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), often referred to as the Women's Rights Charter, is almost universally ratified with only a few countries such as the United States of America, Somalia and South Sudan among others still to ratify.

It is a time when we have seen a greater recognition of the importance of women in the peace and security agenda with the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 among others. The global 20 year review of the commitments made on Women, Peace, Development and Equality in Beijing in 1995 is underway. The world is at a juncture on development, security, humanitarian and equality issues, with a momentum to adopt a new sustainable development agenda post-2015.

The quote below from a background paper by the Working Group on Women's Health (former Convener Anne Herdt) captures the essence of what the NGO CSW Geneva has worked to change. This publication, therefore, makes the clear point that women of the world have been advocating rights, equality and justice for decades, and are now demanding implementation and accountability.

"From the moment of her birth, when she is a disappointment to her parents, through childhood when much less is given of food, attention, and love, much more is demanded of a girl than of her brother. A female suffers physically from the devaluation of her sex. Inadequate nutrition, insufficient education, unhealthy practices, irregular immunization, early marriage, and adolescent pregnancy followed by multiple pregnancies leave her in a state of physical depletion throughout her reproductive years, which are the only years most women will know. This is a woman's lot."

I extend my appreciation to the NGO CSW Geneva members and the Bureau for ensuring that we have this record of the history of our Committee for the last four decades. On behalf of the Committee I would like to thank all the women who have been involved in the Committee over the years, especially the volunteers who have willingly undertaken a tremendous amount of work on behalf of the Committee, the partnering organisations that have supported the Committee either financially, with logistical support or by speaking at our events. My thanks also go to the many millions of women who form part of the global movement to transform the lives of women of this and future generations.

A special recognition must go to all the Presidents who led this Committee before me, and to those women who sat at the first table in 1973 and established this Committee. I give special recognition to Conchita, my predecessor for her acts of courage, persistence and commitment, may she rest in peace. This is our special gift to the present and to the future, as we continue to strive for gender equality, women's rights and empowerment.

Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda

President, NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva

August 2014, Geneva

CHAPTER 1

THE FOUNDING AND FIRST FIVE YEARS OF THE NGO CSW GENEVA

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva (NGO CSW Geneva) is an NGO membership-based committee dedicated to advocating for women's human rights and gender equality. Its rich history spans 40 years, during which time it has passionately pursued its mission of promoting, protecting, respecting and improving women's human rights around the world.

The history of the Committee starts in 1973 when a group was established to prepare an NGO response to the United Nations (UN) International Women's Year in 1975 and to support the UN in achieving its objectives. Its members were NGOs which had exercised their right to participate in the UN system through an accreditation process administered by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and grounded in Article 71, Chapter 10 of the UN Charter which states:

"The Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence. Such arrangements may be made with international organizations and, where appropriate, with national organizations after consultation with the Member of the United Nations concerned."

Some earlier background: CoNGO and the Human Rights Committee

In 1948, international and regional non-governmental organisations that had obtained such consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council formed a conference, assembled under the Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations in Consultative Relationship with the UN (CoNGO), to facilitate NGOs' participation in United Nations affairs and to develop

and strengthen the consultative process. Under the CoNGO umbrella, working groups and committees were established to foster joint activities in support of specific UN programmes and projects. A CoNGO Special Committee on Human Rights was formed in 1966 in Geneva to prepare for the UN International Year of Human Rights in 1968. The first Chairman of the CoNGO Special Human Rights Committee was Sean MacBride, an Irish statesman, Secretary General of the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva, co-founder of Amnesty International and Nobel Peace Prize Winner in 1974 for his human rights advocacy work.



Palais des Nations, Geneva

Towards a UN International Women's Year

In 1972 the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) recommended to the General Assembly that 1975 be designated "International Women's Year" as a year-long campaign to draw global attention to the problems of discrimination against women around the world, by engaging governments, NGOs and individuals in actively promoting equality between men and women, and to recognise women's important role in development and peace-building.

Several factors lay behind this decision: 1972 marked the 25th anniversary of the UN CSW, providing it with an opportunity to review its achievements.

* NGOs consultative relationship with ECOSOC is governed today by ECOSOC resolution 1996/31, which in addition to defining eligibility requirements, also defines the different types of consultative status as well as their related rights and obligations for NGOs, the procedures for the withdrawal or suspension, the role and functions of the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs, and the responsibilities of the UN Secretariat in supporting the consultative relationship.



Entrance to the Palais des Nations, Geneva

The UN wanted to implement the principles of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, adopted on 7 November 1967 (the precursor to the 1979 Convention), and to ensure that all governments had social and legal systems in place to implement women's human rights and to promote equality between men and women. The UN also wanted to promote the full participation of women in economic, social and cultural development as set out in an earlier UN resolution (Resolution 2626 (XXV) of 24 October 1970), on the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade. The first World Conference on the Status of Women, convened in Mexico City to coincide with the 1975 International Women's Year, would also be an opportunity to recognise women's important contribution to peace-building, and to encourage governments to ratify the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention on equal remuneration of men and women workers for work of equal value (Convention Number 100, 1951). Added to this was the tireless campaigning by many Women's NGOs for an International Women's Year.

The establishment of the NGO Subcommittee on the Status of Women in 1973

Many women's organisations were active members of the CoNGO Human Rights Committee in the early 1970s, including the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), which was the organization that took the initiative to launch a petition calling for a UN International Women's Year, signed by around one hundred NGOs and supported by various governments.

In 1972, when the UN's General Assembly declared 1975 as International Women's Year (IWY), the UN representative for the WIDF, Shahnaz Alami, with the support of many NGOs, suggested to the CoNGO Special Committee on Human Rights that they establish a Subcommittee on the Status of Women for the promotion and support of the IWY for the advancement of women around the world. This suggestion was accepted.

WIDF was invited to organise the subcommittee, and set up a meeting with 19 NGOs expressing interest

in women's human rights to draft proposals for the Subcommittee's objectives and a work plan. These were presented to the CoNGO Special Committee on Human Rights for approval on 30th January 1973, which was duly granted. As the Subcommittee on the Status of Women would operate autonomously, it needed to elect an Executive Bureau, a small team to oversee the committee's activities. The member organisations represented in the first Bureau were: WIDF, represented by Shahnaz Alami as President, Socialist International Women represented by Renée Chavanne as Secretary. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) represented by Edith Ballantyne, its Secretary General, was also part of the first Bureau, and the International Council of Women (ICW) represented by Jeannine de Boccard later joined in 1975 as the French Secretary.

The NGO Subcommittee on the Status of Women's first activities

The newly formed Subcommittee on the Status of Women held its first full meeting on 21st May 1973 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva in the presence of several invited guests, including Mr Curtis Roosevelt, Head of NGO Liaison at the UN in New York, Mrs Giuriati, Head of NGO Liaison at the United Nations in Geneva and Mrs Janjic, Office Coordinator, Women's Programme at the ILO in Geneva.

The meeting welcomed the appointment of Helvi Sipilä as Assistant Secretary General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at the UN, a known supporter of women's equality, who would lead the planning of the IWY. Mr Roosevelt stated that NGOs had an extremely important contribution to make towards changing society by working together at a national level and could assist the UN to advance women's rights in different countries.

The Geneva Subcommittee suggested topics and speakers for a parallel NGO Forum to be held during the First World Conference on Women in 1975, which CoNGO had been asked to organise. The Subcommittee also agreed to help ensure that women were included in the national government delegations attending the First Women's World Conference in Mexico.

Other topics discussed at the meeting included women's employment, recognition of the important role

of rural female agricultural workers in developing countries, and the essential role of men in helping to eliminate discrimination against women.

The Subcommittee approached the organisers of the UN World Population Year in 1974 and the UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), requesting them to include women's issues in their conference agenda, because of the impact the status of women has on the entire population. The use of mass media and national intermediaries to mobilise public opinion in favour of non-discrimination against women was agreed upon. Each NGO was asked to review progress on women's human rights and to identify obstacles that prevented the integration of women in the economy and development. The UN for its part was encouraged to share disaggregated statistics with NGOs.

The Geneva Subcommittee's work plan during the International Women's Year included:

- Lobbying the UN CSW to launch an international campaign to ratify and implement UN international conventions promoting women's rights during the IWY;
- Organising an international meeting to review progress on resolution 2716 (XXV) – Programme of Concerted International Action for the Advancement of Women;
- Proposing that seminars on the education and training of rural women and working women (especially those with family responsibilities) be included in the IWY programme;
- Requesting that seminars on the elimination of illiteracy by the end of the second decade of development be held and that women and girls be represented in technical schools and centres of professional education in all countries, especially in developing countries;
- Lobbying governments to mobilise public opinion in favour of equal rights between men and women.

Given the importance of women's right to work, a small ad hoc working group was established in May 1973 with a mandate to consult NGOs in preparing for the International Women's Year. The

Subcommittee agreed to write to the ILO Director General requesting that equality in the treatment of women workers be included on the agenda of the 1975 International Labour Conference.

The Subcommittee's achievements in its first three years (1973-1976)

Organisation of a Preparatory Meeting for the IWY in 1974

By July 1974, the Geneva Subcommittee had already organised a preparatory meeting for the International Women's Year in 1975. Mrs Palmer of the YWCA presided over the gathering of 57 delegates from international NGOs. Mrs Helvi Sipilä, Assistant Secretary General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, participated in the conference together with speakers from the UN, the ILO, and the President of CoNGO.

Conference discussions centred on the maximisation of women's participation in economic, political, social and cultural arenas. NGOs agreed to encourage their national branches to identify and remove obstacles to the implementation of recent UN conventions and urge national governments to ratify the UN conventions as well as those of the ILO, UNESCO and other agencies.

Participation in the First World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975

Several representatives of the Geneva Subcommittee participated in the NGO Forum – "The Tribune" – parallel to the main UN Conference in Mexico in 1975. The NGO CSW contribution is detailed in the Chapter on the World Conferences on Women.

Achievements between 1976 and 1979

Following the success of the First World Conference on Women in Mexico, the UN General Assembly in December 1975 declared 1976-1985 "Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace". Concerned that the third theme of peace might be side-lined during the UN Decade, the Subcommittee organised a seminar in Vienna on 'Women and Disarmament' in April 1978, which was attended by over 80 participants from 23 countries. The Seminar discussed the economic and social consequences of armaments on women and their families, peace education and ways to encourage women to campaign for peace and disarmament.

A working group was established to prepare for the International Year of the Child (IYC) to co-ordinate the exchange of information and to review existing written communication such as UN and NGO leaflets on the topic. A session on 'Children Living Under the Apartheid Regime' was organized jointly with the working group on racism and racial discrimination.

Employment was much debated during this period following the adoption, at the ILO's 1975 International Labour Conference, of the Declaration on Equality of Opportunity and Treatment for Women Workers. The Ad Hoc Working Group on Employment followed developments on women's unemployment, the economic value of unpaid work, and discrimination against women in access to training and employment. The working group prepared a statement with recommendations for the 1978 International Labour Conference, some of which were adopted.

CHAPTER 2

SUBSTANTIVE WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE

The NGO CSW Geneva has been meeting regularly as a Committee in Geneva, but most of its substantive work until 2011 was carried out in smaller working groups. An overview of some of the work carried out in these groups is given below.

A. Work carried out in the working groups

Working Group on Female Circumcision (later became the "Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Harmful to the Health of Women and Children")

Although female circumcision, female genital mutilation (FGM) or cutting has appeared on the UN agenda since the 1950s, the sensitivity of the subject prevented discussion of this taboo practice. In 1977, the NGO CSW Geneva formed a Working Group on female circumcision in preparation for the Second World Women's Conference in 1980 and for the UN decade for women. The group, formed to inform and advise other international NGOs, started by gathering information on the prevalence and complexity of this cultural practice. Mrs Tevoedjre (ICW) and Mrs Linnander (Anti-Slavery Society) travelled to Nairobi and Khartoum to encourage the training of midwives on female circumcision. However they reported being confronted by psychological barriers that prevented any open discussion on FGM. They met with more success when they approached FGM from the point of view of the harm it caused to the health of women and girls rather than addressing it from a human rights perspective.

The group also consulted the secretariats of some Inter-Governmental Agencies which were prepared to collaborate with grassroots NGOs including UNICEF and the World Health Organisation (WHO). In February 1979, the World Health Organisation organised a seminar on female genital mutilation in Khartoum and invited African NGO representatives to attend. Thanks to a generous donation made by the Dutch Government, some African NGOs were able to participate in the seminar. Fran Hosken, the organiser of the WHO seminar was instrumental

in the fight against FGM. After the WHO seminar, the working group organised an information-sharing meeting at WHO in Geneva in March 1979, for NGOs to discuss the outcomes of the Khartoum seminar. Invited speakers included the editor of an African journal on family and development, and the President of the Association of Women's Research and Development who was amongst the first to take action against this harmful practice. A Paris-based doctor researching the history of FGM also participated and shared his research findings. The working group briefed and assisted NGOs to become involved in advocacy work on FGM, including securing funding to help rural women.

Campaigning to raise awareness of this taboo practice at the UN was a key contribution made by this working group. This was spearheaded by Berhane Ras-Work who replaced Mrs Tevoedjre in 1982 as the group coordinator and travelled with Margareta Linnander to many African countries on further fact-finding missions.

In 1984 the working group organised a seminar in Dakar, Senegal on FGM and traditional practices with the Government of Senegal and support from UNICEF, UNFPA, Save the Children Sweden and the Government of the Netherlands.

African participants who had attended this seminar then decided to set up the Inter African Committee (IAC) to work on FGM in African countries. The IAC subsequently became an influential independent organisation advocating for the elimination of FGM. It produced a booklet with a glossary of terms used with FGM in efforts to raise awareness of the meaning of the terms. The IAC set up many National Committees in Africa to work at the grass root level with local



IAC Logo

populations. Its name was later changed to Inter African Committee on Traditional Practices Harmful to the Health of Women and Children.

Many NGO representatives lobbied for FGM to be recognised at the UN and were responsible for a noticeable change in attitudes at the UN, including Irene Thomas, a well-regarded gynaecologist and obstetrician from Nigeria who was financed by Sorooptimist International to come to Geneva to explain FGM to the Commission on Human Rights which prompted the Commission to draft a detailed report on the various forms of female circumcision in 1986: Report of the Working Group on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (document E/CN.4/1986/42).

The Minority Rights Group was also very influential in introducing the subject of FGM at the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. After much NGO lobbying at the UN, a resolution was adopted in 1984 by the Commission on Human Rights to establish a UN Working Group of experts on traditional practices, with Mrs Halima Embarek Warzazi from Morocco as Chair-Rapporteur and Mrs. Murlidhara Bandari of India. Seminars on traditional practices were later organized in Burkina Faso and Sri Lanka. And in the mid-1980s female genital mutilation/cutting was finally recognised as a form of violence against women.

As to the World Health Organisation, a formal statement on its position regarding FGM was delivered at the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1982 and a Resolution was passed in 1985 at the World Health Assembly (WHA.38.27).

In February 2003, the IAC organised an International Conference on Zero Tolerance to FGM in Addis Ababa, which resulted in the adoption of a Common Agenda for Action to Achieve Zero Tolerance, and February 6th was declared as the International Day of Zero Tolerance to FGM.

While changes at the international level are slow, collective advocacy, campaigning and implementation at the grassroots level are imperative to change attitudes towards this deep-seated cultural practice. The NGO CSW Geneva continues to work with UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO and other UN bodies advocating for social and cultural change.

Working Group on the Environment

This working group studied environmental issues such as pollution, poor sanitation, resource and energy wastage ("throw away consumerism") and the importance of education in changing attitudes to instil a more caring and responsible approach to the environment. It advocated for women's involvement in the planning of water supply and sanitation programs as women play an important role in the management of water resources, including its quality, storage and recycling. It also raised awareness of the negative impact and environmental and health problems of accidents such as the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

Representatives from the group attended meetings on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), such as the pesticide DDT and other hazardous chemicals relative to the Rotterdam Convention, which are harmful even in low concentrations. The group collaborated with other organisations to eliminate POPs through a Treaty and attended a meeting on POPs where a Convention was signed banning the worst substances. It also dealt with the issue of waste to ensure its handling, transportation and storage was carried out in an environmentally friendly manner.

The working group contributed to the June 1992 UN Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio, Brazil and participated in preparatory meetings in Geneva and New York. Other environmental issues discussed by the group included genetically modified foods, and the Kyoto Protocol dealing with greenhouse gas emissions, quotas and other measures to counter climate change and global warming. The group has organised a Women/Gender Caucus on Science and Environment dealing with natural disasters through global warming, attended the preparatory session of the Convention on Climate Change in Bonn, and the Rio+10 meeting in Johannesburg.

During the International Year of Fresh Water in 2003, the members of the WG participated actively in various meetings. Corinne Wacker (ICW) attended the Kyoto Summit, which motivated her to organise, together with the Universities of Basel and Zurich and ICW, a Symposium on "Water, Cultural Diversity and International Solidarity" in November 2003 in Geneva.

In November 2005 the Working Group on Environment and the NGO Committee on Development Geneva organised a Symposium "Water: Key to Development". The proceedings were published in a document edited by Jeannine de Bocard and Corinne Wacker, the organisers of the symposium.

Working Group on Women and Employment

Although various aspects of the topic "women and employment" have been discussed since the founding of the NGO CSW Geneva in 1973, it was not until the early 1980s that the group's work became more formalised as it prepared for the 1985 UN Nairobi Women's World Conference. This group worked to ensure that issues related to women's work and employment appeared on the agenda of international institutions such as ECOSOC, UNCTAD, ILO, the WTO and the World Bank.

Women's employment and other issues dealt with by working group have included: the situation of women in times of economic crisis, the role of transnational corporations and the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men. Also promoted by this group: women's empowerment as producers and consumers, women's property rights including intellectual property, access to credit as well as an assessment of the impact of new technologies and e-commerce on women's employment.

Fund raising efforts resulted in financial assistance for some members to attend the Nairobi Conference where the Working Group took responsibility for organising the NGO Forum Plenary on Employment.

The Working Group on Women and Employment also addressed wider aspects of employment. Members from the Norwegian Housewives, the London based 'Wages for Housework' and the Indian Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) joined the debate on



Michelle Bachelet, UN Women's Executive Director addressing the 100th International Labour Conference on Eliminating Inequalities Between Women and Men, 2011

women's employment. Dunja Pastizzi Ferencic from the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) supported the inclusion of unpaid work in national accounts. This was important to the Working Group since unpaid work was a central policy issue for its members. The Group established links with the UN Statistics Division at the UNECE and the ILO, which later gave rise to interviews with Luisella Goldschmid Clermont, ILO consultant and other officials.

The Working Group submitted its first statement on the economic contribution of unpaid work to the UN Commission on the Status of Women (New York) in 1986. It emphasized the essential role played by women, particularly women in the rural economy, who gather, produce and process food for the family, care for children, collect fuel and water and also provide goods and services. The group pressed for women's contribution to the economy to be included in national accounts as recommended in the *Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women*. Not recognising unpaid household work as "work" and ignoring domestic activities as "production" was considered an obstacle to development.

The group's convener, Sonia Heptonstall (Soroptomist International), invited a representative from the UNECE Statistical Division to address the NGO CSW Geneva on the subject of disaggregated statistics. The working group also discussed the work of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) which dealt with unpaid work and had developed time-use surveys for measuring unrecorded contributions of women to household income and evaluate its monetary value as home-based activities.

The Working Group on Women and Employment, with the support of 18 NGOs, delivered a Statement to the thirty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women under the Priority theme: Equality. In 1991 the Working Group Chair was given the platform at the ILO 78th Labour Conference to speak on behalf of the Working Group. This was in the context of the Director General's Report on "The Dilemma of the Informal Sector". The report set the scene for a focus on the world's working poor, especially in rural economies.

With the encouragement of Raymonde Martineau, the NGO Liaison Officer, the Working Group lob-

bied for more women to be in professional positions within the UN system.

The group prepared many statements over the years and has held informal debates on a variety of subjects, such as in June 1996 to exchange views and to lobby delegates to adopt a Convention on Home Work proposed by the ILO. In 2009 as some of the group's work overlapped with the NGO CSW Geneva working group on Women for the UNECE Region, the two groups were amalgamated and given the name of the "Working Group on Women's Employment and Gender Economics".

Working Group on Women for the UNECE region

The NGO working group on Women for the Economic Commission for Europe region (UNECE) liaised with the UNECE, which monitors the implementation of all UN policies on gender equality and equity for this large and diverse region, that in addition to Europe also includes the USA and Canada, as well as central Asia and Israel. Its aims include capacity building through training, meetings, coalition building, and use of information, communication technology and financial support.

The working group was set up in 1994, a year before the 4th World Conference on Women was to be held in Beijing. Each UN region had to call a preparatory conference: as Geneva is the Secretariat headquarters for the UNECE. Under the leadership of Danielle Bridel (ZONTA International), and in collaboration and with the financial support of the UNECE, the group organised an NGO forum in conjunction with the UNECE Regional preparatory Conference.

At the time, there seemed little UNECE interest in supporting women's employment as the UNECE was concentrating almost entirely on economic issues. The question of defining "work", which is central to the assessment of GDP, has important implications for gender equality; so it was essential to making the NGO voice heard on the subject. The outcome, with the support of Anne Herdt (International Council on Social Welfare), was the formation of a more formal Working Group on Women and Employment.

The WG on Women for the UNECE Region provided NGO input and has also assisted the UNECE secretariat in compiling information for the Beijing

Conference follow-up activities in the region. NGO Representatives of the NGO CSW Geneva have thus taken part in UNECE high-level regional preparatory meetings. They organized NGO Forums prior to the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meetings for all the 2000, 2005 and 2010 Reviews of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing+5, Beijing+10 and Beijing+15). The WG has also organised a seminar in Warsaw in 1998 (covered later in the report).

The collaboration between the NGO CSW Geneva and the UNECE is an excellent model of a constructive partnership greatly valued by both parties. The UNECE, which had previously dealt almost entirely with economic issues, became more sensitive to social matters. The Beijing+20 review NGO forum organised by the NGO CSW Geneva in November 2014 is again in collaboration with the UNECE.

Geneva Advocacy Notes

Over the years, the NGO CSW Geneva, in co-operation with the WG on Women in the UN ECE Region, has produced for a limited period when funding per-

mitted, the *Geneva Advocacy Notes*. This newsletter introduced by Conchita Poncini (IFUW), was originally published as a hard copy, but later also distributed in electronic form. It provided timely information on events of interest to women held by the UN and its Agencies in Geneva, allowing NGOs sufficient time to plan and prepare relevant submissions, statements or other input.

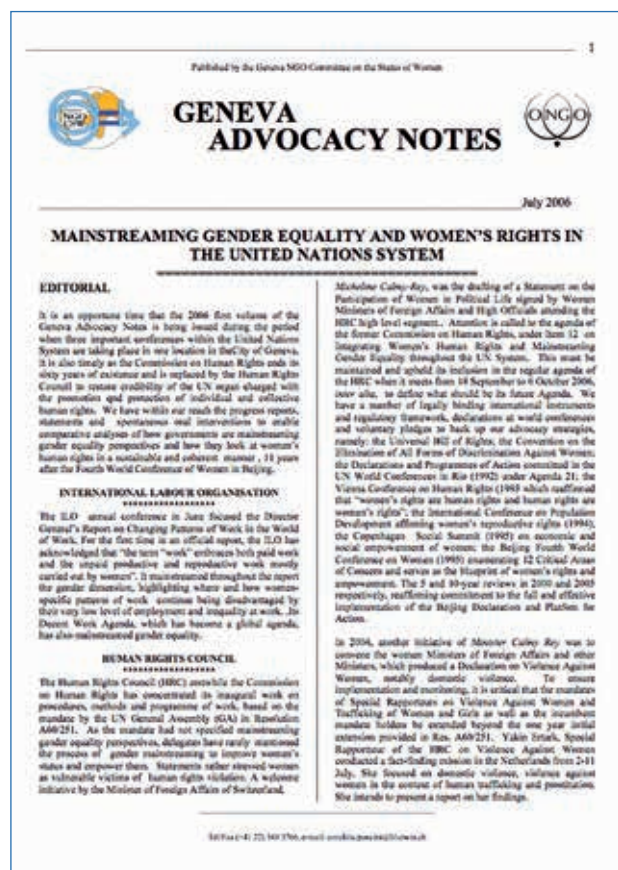
The *Geneva Advocacy Notes* reinforced NGO commitment to advocate for the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. It also alerted NGOs about requests for information and case studies from UN Special Rapporteurs on topics such as violence against women, the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The newsletter also publicised details of meetings in Geneva and elsewhere. Other members of the editorial team included Danielle Bridel (Zonta International), Krishna Ahoojapatel (WILPF), Jeannine de Boccard (ICW), Helene Sackstein (IAW) and Elizabeth Reichard (Franciscans International).

Working Group on Women and Peace

The Working Group on Women and Peace was formed early on by members of the NGO CSW Geneva to ensure that the impact of militarization of society, military conflict and peace on the advancement of women was given due attention for the International Women's Year (IWY) activities, as well as in the elaboration of the plan for an possible Decade for Women. The working group took up issues relating to peace from a gender perspective, understanding peace not only as the absence of war, but as a positive concept of conditions which enable the full enjoyment of human rights by all.

Even though quite a few women's organizations considered the issue of war and peace as too political and were against including it in the IWY, it did become part of the programme adopted for the Decade. Much of the work of the group focused on the integration of a gender perspective in conflict prevention and resolution, peace building, and reconciliation. It also addressed the promotion of human security, and its significance for women.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) convened the group in the early years when the international focus was on disarmament and reducing military expenditure to increase

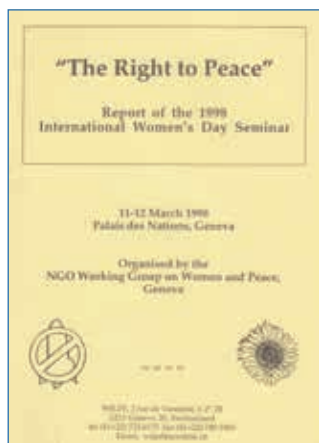


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the resources to be invested in social programmes, including those fostering the advancement of women. The group organized various activities with a focus on disarmament and conflict prevention. Later convened by Daniel Bridel (Soroptimist International) who served for 15 years, the group's main focus became peace education. She stepped down in 1999 for reasons of health, and after some reflection, the group decided on two co-conveners, Bineta Diop (Femmes Africa Solidarité) and Michaela Told (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom), with an emphasis on promoting and implementing the Security Council Resolution 1325.

The Working Group on Women and Peace organised and attended many events over the years, such as disarmament seminars, International Women's Day Seminars, discussions on the situation in Afghanistan and leadership peace training for Afghan women. It has submitted a statement to the CSW in New York on women in armed conflict and to the Conference on Disarmament, invited speakers from UN Agencies such as UNESCO to speak about peace as a human right, and collaborated with the BANGWE project so that women in the Africa Great Lakes Region could make their views on peace and reconciliation heard.

In collaboration with other groups, the WG on Women and Peace participated in an Annual Conference of the Women's Federation for World Peace held in Geneva, and collaborated with the Working Group on Women's Health. It also tried to foster closer ties with the New York-based NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, that advocates for the equal and full participation of women in all efforts to create and maintain international peace and security, and focuses on implementation of SCR 1325 and all other similar Security Council resolutions. The group worked on a joint mapping project of women involved in peace efforts around the world which was never brought to fruition.



Report on a Seminar on the Right to Peace, IWD 1998

The WG has issued joint statements with the NGO Committee on racism and racial discrimination, on discrimination against indigenous peoples, and racism and discrimination as a means of controlling wealth. Members of the Group believe that the intersection of racial discrimination, sex-based and class/descent/caste-based discrimination makes women's oppression even more acute and leaves them trapped in a triangle of discriminatory practices. The group has urged African NGOs to become more involved in conferences on racism and discrimination such as the one held in 1984 in Dakar. It also connected with other working groups, such as Health and Human Rights to collaborate on HIV/AIDS actions.

Peace and security remain vital for the advancement of women's human rights, and the NGO CSW Geneva continues to focus on issues of war, peace, security, armaments, and militarism in the world, and its members currently follow the work of the Human Rights Council Open-Ended Working Group on a draft UN Declaration on the Right to Peace.

Working Group on Refugee and Migrant Women

The Working Group on Refugee and Migrant Women was established by Hodaya Etemadi, herself an Afghan refugee in Switzerland. The Working Group organised the first-ever International Consultation on Refugee Women from 15-19 November 1988 at the World Council of Churches. The Working Group then published in September 1989 "A Practical Guide – Working with Refugee Women" based on information drawn from this International Consultation. The WG on Refugee and Migrant Women and the WG on Women and Peace worked together on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Expert Meeting on Refugee and Displaced Women and Children, which took place in July 1990 in Vienna.

After the consultation, the working group organized the first NGO Conference on Women Refugees in the Arab world in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. As Convener of the working group in 1997, Hodaya Etemadi (International Catholic Migration Commission) was one of 22 signatories who wrote an open letter to the Taliban calling on them to ensure respect and dignity of Afghan women, punishment for instigators of violence against women and requesting that the Taliban remove any restrictions to education, work and mobility of women and girls.

In the same year the working group initiated a project called “Chadors for Peace, Women Promoting Peace in Afghanistan”. It focused on how Afghan women could be given the tools and skills to participate in conflict resolution and peace building, thus offering opportunities for national reconciliation. The title for the project is based on the Pashtun tradition where women can broker peace using their head dress to intervene in conflict situations, demanding peace or forgiveness.

The BANGWE project (see below) was also initially developed under the working group on refugee and migrant women, but later became an independent group. The two groups took the approach that women in conflict should not be seen as victims but rather as strong human beings with a potential to bridge divisions and harness their unique contributions to peace building. Both projects initially focussed on understanding the causes and dynamics of conflict in order to identify appropriate peace strategies.

Homayra Etemadi, then representative from the International Catholic Migration Commission, authored an article in 1998 in which she discussed in depth the many causes of the war in Afghanistan. For the past five years Homayra Etemadi has served as the First Deputy Chief of Staff in the Office of the President of Afghanistan.

BANGWE project – Dialogue, Reconciliation and Non Violence, Women and Peace in the Great Lakes Region of Africa

The BANGWE project was set up by Colette Samoya in 1998 with the support of some members of the NGO CSW Geneva. Initially this team functioned as a task force of the Committee but in 2002 it became an association, BANGWE

& Dialogue, recognised under Swiss law and it gained ECOSOC status in 2007. It is the only field project supported by the NGO CSW Geneva created to provide opportunities for collaboration between women from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda on reconciliation and peace-building in these war-torn countries.



[BANGWE & Dialogue Logo](#)

The name of the project ‘BANGWE’ is based on the word used by women in Burundi as arbitrators of disputes within their families and communities, such as land disputes. Traditionally women would stand between men involved in a dispute and shout “BANGWE”, which would immediately stop any argument or physical violence. The aim of this project is to raise awareness amongst both national and international communities of the need to involve women in all stages of the peace process. The project mobilises action amongst associations advocating for non-violence and peace, organises conferences and produces educational material. The group has organised several side events at the Human Rights Council with invited guests such as the then Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Radhika Coomaraswamy, representatives from UNICEF and Médecins Sans Frontières, as well as high profile speakers from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda.

Working Group on Women's Health

The Working Group on Women's Health was one of several groups formed in the 1980s to prepare NGO CSW Geneva contributions for the UN Nairobi Women's Conference in 1985 and was maintained thereafter. The first convener of the group was Anne Herdt (International Council of Social Welfare).

The group has covered a wide range of health topics including an early seminar organised at the World Health Organisation on ‘Women and AIDS’, attended by 33 NGOs. In 1988 when awareness of AIDS was increasing, the group delivered a statement to the Commission on Human Rights on the social determinants of AIDS. Furthermore, in response to a WHO statement predicting a 10-fold increase in AIDS within five years, the group requested that the medical facts of the disease be freely circulated within each country, so that information was available to patients, families and partners; the right for everyone to receive medical treatment should be recognised, and education on preventative measures encouraged.

The group later delivered a statement to the UN Working Group on the Right to Development to ensure that women's rights were recognised as human rights. It pointed out that the health of any society rests largely on the well-being of its family units, which in turn depend on the health, literacy and

status of women. Members of this group also organised a panel session at the UN Women's World Conference in Nairobi together with other NGO CSW Geneva Working Groups. Group members also participated in the NGO response to the 'The Jakarta Declaration on Leading Health Promotion into the 21st Century' (an international agreement signed at the World Health Organization's 4th International Conference on Health Promotion held in Jakarta in 1997), which gave greater prominence to health promotion as part of public health.

In 1998, the Working Group on Health merged with the Working Group on Development Education to enable health issues to be addressed from a broader perspective, including health as a human right and the trade-related impact on health.

The topics dealt with by the Working Group have included Violence Against Women (mental and physical impact); Child and Forced Marriage; Maternal Health and Maternal Mortality (with members engaging in advocacy for the three OHCHR Maternal Mortality Resolutions); Sexual and Reproductive Health; Mental Health and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Other topics previously discussed included health promotion and self care, emergency and humanitarian aid, trafficking of girls, the Millennium Development Goals, bioethics and reproductive rights, post-conflict health, as well as the impact of Harmful Traditional Practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) on women's health.

The Working Group has sponsored and co-sponsored numerous panels at the Human Rights Council and the UN Commission on the Status of Women on a variety of women's health issues including "Safer Childbirth"; Nutrition and Health; Health Education over Women's life span; Women's Right to Health (access and services) and sexual and reproductive rights.

In 2009 this group worked with Anand Grover, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The group collected, summarised and shared resources and conference reports from "Women Deliver", Chatham House, World Health Assembly, Partnerships for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, Global Access for Health, the Lancet, the NGO Forum for Health and

the Alliance for Health Promotion. The group also worked with the University of Geneva on health and human rights education and established links with Professor Paul Hunt from the University of Essex, UK, a UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health (2002-2008).

One of the group's co-conveners, Afton Beutler (now representing the Mothers Legacy Project), previously worked with Worldwide Organisation for Women (WOW) to develop the Global Education Opportunity program which enables students to gain knowledge of international issues by attending meetings of the Human Rights Council, World Health Assembly, and the International Labour Organisation in Geneva, which they combine with a month spent working on a grassroots project. These students attended NGO CSW Geneva meetings and were mentored by committee members.

Working Group on Nutrition

In the early 1990s the Co-Conveners, Joanna Koch (La Leche League / Associated Country Women of the World) and Myrna Lachenal (World Federation for Mental Health) were members of an NGO Committee attached to UNICEF. In 1991 UNICEF asked them to form an NGO Working Group on Nutrition to encourage NGO participation in the 1992 WHO/FAO International Conference on Nutrition in Rome (ICN). The group contributed to the conference preparation, working in partnership with the NGO Group attached to FAO and with the Nutrition Division of FAO. Joanna Koch was invited to speak at the opening Plenary of the Conference with a prepared statement on behalf of all NGOs.

After the Conference, the group concentrated on implementation, advising WHO and FAO as well as other NGOs. The FAO was very satisfied with the Geneva Working Group and provided them with a grant to write a book of Guidelines for ways in which NGOs could implement the Conference Declaration and Plan of Action. Geneva and Rome based NGOs contributed to the book and a professional drafted the final version.

At the request of WHO, the Convener attended two follow-up Conferences in Cardiff, Wales (UK) and Magdeburg in Germany. The Group has worked with WHO on many different nutrition and education issues. A briefing was also held at the UN during the

World Health Assembly to outline the importance of water and food security.

The NGO WG on Nutrition in Geneva contributed to the preparations for the 1996 World Food Summit, submitting many recommendations for the draft World Declaration and Plan of Action, and was invited on a number of occasions to FAO to provide advice. From those early days, the group enjoyed a good working relationship with the ad hoc group of Permanent Representatives at FAO in Rome, the Food Safety Institute in Indonesia, WHO and other organisations.

The group partnered with other UN Agencies including the World Meteorology Organisation (WMO) for a Briefing on the role of water in nutrition and food security. It also organised a workshop at the UNECE Preparatory Experts Meeting in Geneva in 2000 "Women and the Economy: Women in Food Production" to analyse nutrition and food security in the UNECE region, highlighting policies to improve the current situation. The workshop looked at trends and patterns of women in the economy, environmental and energy implications, and the need for education and training. It also participated in a workshop at the Copenhagen Social Summit +5 "Social Development, Food Production and the Environment". The group has written several background papers and submitted recommendations on topics such as "Rural Women and Women Farmers in Traditional Agriculture".

The group follows the UN Committee on the Convention of the Rights of the Child, paying attention to the nutritional situation of children in national reports and the UN Global Conferences on Health Promotion. It also contributed to the UN World Assembly on Ageing in 2002 with a panel discussion on 'Nutrition and Ageing-Impact on Health and Development'. The group has commented on a joint draft report of the WHO/FAO Expert Meeting on Diet, Nutrition, Chronic Diseases and Physical Activity and submitted a number of recommendations, which were subsequently adopted.

The Convener presented nutrition issues concerning mountain women, participated in the International Conference on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development – Adelboden organised by the FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture of Switzerland and

was invited to join the drafting group for the Plan of Action.

The Working Group on nutrition has organised many joint events with other Working Groups and organisations. One example was a seminar on Water Sanitation and Health, Gender and Food Security, Status of Women, the Environment and Nutrition, which was organised with the Working Group on the Environment. The Group also ran a joint project, "Assessing and Evaluating Women's Role in Food Security in Africa" with the Graduate Institute of Development Studies, Geneva, the Coalition of African Organizations on Food Security and Sustainable Development and the Swiss Church Aid Society. The Group also partnered with Food First, at the World Health Assembly on the subject of the Right to Food and followed this up with a book on the subject.

It has also engaged in other activities such as producing a background paper on 'Women and the Right to Food Security'. For many years, it published a bi-annual publication, "Call to Action" often in collaboration with the FAO Group of NGOs.

As a representative for La Leche League and a breastfeeding advocate, the Joanna Koch has always supported the WHO/UNICEF Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative launched in 1960 and contributed at the time to the draft Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Working Group on the Girl Child

This Working Group addressed the root causes of gender inequality and discrimination in childhood to ensure that all girls enjoy the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant human rights instruments on an equal basis with boys. It stressed that gender inequality and discrimination occurred at all ages but is particularly damaging in the early years of life as it can have an adverse impact on the entire life. It ensured that issues such as harmful traditional practices, child labour, sexual exploitation and abuse of girls, armed conflict and related issues were kept high on the UN agenda. It advocated for the full implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Platform for Action 1993 and the BPFA, 1995, particularly the section on the Girl Child.

The Working Group drew attention to serious violations of girls' human rights and sought to change discriminatory laws, practices and attitudes. It organised joint events with UNICEF such as a workshop on "Abuse, exploitation and trafficking of girls and young women, prevention and action" during the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for Beijing+5. It mobilised NGOs to ensure implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, participated in Beijing reviews, cooperated with the NGO CSW New York to strengthen advocacy and worldwide networking by participating at the General Assembly Special Session in 2000. It also cooperated with several other Working Groups, including, the Working Groups on Traditional Practices, Health, Nutrition and Education.

The group delivered several statements to the Human Rights Council and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and made submissions to UN agencies on various issues. The Working group occasionally held joint caucuses with the women's caucus during the Human Rights Council Sessions and supported the work of the relevant Special Rapporteurs. Through persistent lobbying the group was successful in improving the wording included on the girl child in the yearly omnibus resolution on the Rights of the Child of the Commission on Human Rights (2000/85). The group Convener, Renate Bloem (World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women), also participated in a seminar on "Children's Rights" in London where as a panellist she delivered a comprehensive statement on the Girl Child. The Working Group commits Governments to ensuring that girls have the full range of children's rights including their survival, protection, development and participation.

In later years the group focussed on ensuring that the living conditions of the girl child are taken into account, integrated and improved within all UN documents or human rights mechanisms. It continued to organise side-events on the girl child as well as lobbying the relevant Special Rapporteur. More specifically it has worked on marginalised children and sexual exploitation/violence against children and the education of the girl child. It has also worked on foeticides against girls, which occur in many parts of the world besides India

and China. Led by Brigitte Polonovski (ICW), the Working Group produced an advocacy booklet "A Girl's Right to Live – Female Foeticide and Girl Infanticide", which was launched at a side-event of the Human Rights Council.

B. Events hosted or co-hosted by the NGO CSW Geneva

UNECE Seminar, Warsaw 1998

One example of the innovative ideas of the Working Group on Women in the UNECE was a two-day seminar it organised for the Region in Warsaw (1998) on "Implementing Economic and Social Rights of Women in Countries in Transition – Progress and Problems". It assessed progress and achievement of women's economic and social rights in the region. Participants addressed the impact of transition and globalization on women's economic and social rights, women's access to paid employment and to self-employment as well as the relationship between rights to employment and social rights. NGOs from participating countries were given a rare opportunity to exchange their countries' experiences during a panel discussion.

This event, organised in collaboration with the Centre for the Advancement of Women in Warsaw and in partnership with the UNECE, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), was the first women's gathering of NGOs from countries in transition. Twenty-nine representatives attended, 13 from Poland and the remainder from Lithuania, Hungary, Croatia, Belarus, Estonia, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Armenia, Latvia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and Switzerland. The seminar afforded a unique opportunity for these NGOs to identify successful initiatives and to share best practice.

Mary Robinson, then High Commissioner for Human Rights, sent an opening message: high profile speakers included the Director of the Central and Eastern European Network for Gender Issues in Budapest, and representatives from the UNECE, the ILO, and the Commission on Human Rights. The seminar drew considerable Polish media attention.

NGO CSW Geneva 30th anniversary celebrations, July 2003

To commemorate the Committee's 30th anniversary in July 2003, the President of the NGO CSW Geneva, Conchita Poncini (IFUW), organised a highly successful two-day NGO Forum "Towards full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action", in preparation for the Beijing+10 review. The purpose of the Forum was to evaluate how far the Beijing Platform for Action had been implemented but it also discussed the possibility of a fifth world women's conference, as well as other topics.

One hundred and fifty delegates from around the world attended to hear presentations made by thirty seven high level speakers including an opening address by Rubens Ricupero, the Secretary General of UNCTAD. Other speakers were Eduardo Doryan of the World Bank, ITU representatives and Patrice Robineau of the UNECE. The second half of the conference focused on reproductive rights and the rights to health and education. Several UN Agencies gave presentations including the World Health Organisation, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Angela King, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, shared important insights on the strategies and challenges to the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action.

An awards ceremony was held at the end of the Forum to give special thanks to founding and still active members of the Committee. The four recipients were Edith Ballantyne (WILPF), Danielle Bridel (Zonta International), Jeannine de Boccard (International Council of Women) and Bernadette von der Weid (International Council of Women). The proceedings were published in a booklet with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

Seminar 'Watershed for Women's Human Rights and Empowerment', 2010

On International Women's Day, 8th March 2010, the NGO CSW Geneva organised a seminar, 'Watershed for Women's Human Rights and Empowerment', which focused on the integration of human rights into the UN system. The first session was moderated by the

President of the NGO CSW Geneva, Conchita Poncini, and high profile speakers included Navi Pillay, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Canadian Ambassador to the UN, as well as Representatives from Chile, the Philippines, Spain and Rwanda. The second theme was 'Beijing+15: Creating new mechanisms to accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action', which was moderated by the Vice-President of the Committee, Krishna Ahoojapatel.

Other speakers at the conference included Mr Patrice Robineau, Senior Advisor to the Executive Secretary, UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Joanina Karugaba, UNHCR, Bineta Diop, President, Femmes Africa Solidarité, Ms Natalie Fisher-Spalton, Deputy General Secretary, World YWCA, and Annalise Ebbe, President, WILPF.

Women's Caucuses organised during the Commission on Human Rights and the Human Right Council Sessions

The Committee holds women's caucus meetings during the Commission on Human Rights/ Human Rights Council as well as side events and informal meetings, allowing NGOs, Government representatives and UN officials to engage in dialogue. The caucus meetings also provide an opportunity for international NGOs to meet, lobby, strategize and coordinate their activities. Different methods have been used at the caucuses to influence policy including weekend e-mail pressure campaigns to lobby for new ideas and language, briefing and strategy meetings, panel discussions on topics such as 'Poverty, violence and the human rights of women', 'Living in the Shadow of Conflict, Poverty and Isolation'.

C. Women's rights issues addressed by Committee members in joint statements delivered to UN organisations

A key part of the Committee's work is the possibility to draft and issue joint statements to the Human Rights Council (that replaced the UN Commission on Human Rights in 2006) and other institutions to influence the UN as well as governments policies. While it is impossible to cover all the statements delivered by members the Committee, a few examples provide insights into its concerns. A non-exhaustive list of statements is also provided in Appendix 5.



Human Rights Council in Session in Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Women's access to banking and finance

The Committee has always been interested in economic issues affecting women, drawing on the expertise of members such as Conchita Poncini, UN representative for the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) and NGO CSW Geneva President, who worked at the ILO for many years. As President of the NGO CSW Geneva, Conchita Poncini made a presentation at an international seminar on "Telework: Challenges and opportunities for women", organised jointly by the UNECE, the Polish Ministry of Economics and the Centre for the Advancement of Women, Warsaw Poland in January 2002.

On behalf of the Committee, Conchita Poncini addressed many UN meetings in Geneva and elsewhere including an economic summit in Brussels in 2001 with representatives of the banking and financial sector. After highlighting the major issues of concern to women (women's right to work, recognition of women's contribution to economic growth, and access to land, property and credit), she urged banks to cater more to women's financial needs, such as credit initiatives and revolving loans, and to trust women's ability to manage and repay loans. She also called for

changes on women's lower wages and ways to break through glass walls and glass ceilings, which prevent women reaching top decision-making positions. She highlighted how outdated notions of women's secondary role in the economic and political arena, ignorance and mental attitudes perpetuate gender inequality. Her statement also called for national and international disaggregated statistical data collection to highlight the inequality between women and men. A common view of NGOs was that gender equality could not be attained without political commitment and accountability of Governments. Furthermore, women's empowerment was dependent on men's willingness to share some of their power.

Women's access to employment

Women's economic status and rights have been paramount from the first meetings in 1973 when the NGO CSW Geneva started its collaboration with the ILO to advance women's rights to work. In a 2005 statement on economic, social and cultural rights, NGOs pointed out that the dominant economic model still categorised men as the 'breadwinners' and women as caregivers and home makers. These economic and social roles are reinforced by culture, religion, men-

tal attitudes and stereotypes, and result in discrimination against women. Women are more vulnerable in the employment market with fewer and lower paid opportunities, earning 20-30% less than their male counterparts. The undervaluing of 'female jobs' and confining women to low paid employment has had negative consequences for women.

The status of women in the world of work

The NGO CSW Geneva Working Group on Women and Employment submitted a statement to the Sub Commission on Human Rights in August 2005 on the status of women in the world of work, indicating that gender inequalities persist despite the four key ILO Conventions on gender equality. These four Conventions are: Convention 100 on Equal Remuneration which calls for equal pay for men and women for work of equal value; Convention 111 on Discrimination on Employment and Occupation which calls for a national policy to eliminate discrimination in access to employment, training and working conditions; Convention 156 on Workers with Family Responsibility which is an enabling convention that calls for men and women to share work and family responsibilities; and Convention 193 on Maternity Protection which provides for the protection of women in their child-bearing role.

As the Working Group points out, without men and boys sharing childcare and house work, women are bound to be the primary caregivers – which contributes to their absence from management and leadership positions in both the public and private sector. The group also pointed out that women are not a homogenous group, as different women engage with the economy in diverse and complex ways as entrepreneurs and decision-makers.

Women represent the majority of the world's poor, and the negative impact of economic policy affects them disproportionately. For example, privatisation of health services has increased the responsibility of women for the care of older persons due to lack of adequate quality care and the increased cost of care.

Women's unpaid work to be included in national accounts

The Geneva Committee seriously questioned the fact that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is still used to analyse economic development even though it is flawed

through not recognising women's unpaid work in the home as productive work. Since the Beijing Platform for Action, greater efforts have been made to rectify this shortcoming by promoting the inclusion of unpaid household work in the System of National Accounts (SNA) used to calculate GDP.

One solution suggested was to use household satellite accounts (HHSA) to complement GDP. However, while the HHSA would increase the perceived value of work done by women, it was not an ideal solution. The Working Group on Women's Employment and Gender Economics having reviewed the methodologies used to calculate HHSA, nevertheless considered on balance the HHSA to be an essential measurement in promoting both sustainable development and gender equality.

Women's participation in decision-making

Women's participation in decision-making is another long-term area of concern for the Committee. In a statement to the Human Rights Council, Committee members indicated that since women represent half of the population, they had an equal right to participate in decision-making in areas such as poverty eradication, the creation of democratic societies, the promotion of policies which incorporate social and economic justice for all, and to ensure world peace and security.

The digital divide

It is important to ensure that women and girls are not left out of the information and communication technology (ICT) revolution that started 25 years ago after the launch of the World Wide Web. ICT is central at work, in conducting businesses, for learning and for communication. Thus, the Committee has advocated for women and girls to have access to high quality education to benefit from these new technologies. The Committee requested that the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) include a gender perspective in its Action Plan to give women equal rights in accessing ICT so as to reduce the digital divide and help eradicate poverty.

Potential solutions offered were educating children in ICT from a young age (which many countries already do), and exposing children, especially girls to science and technology. The availability of transparent gender and age-disaggregated data would also be useful to monitor the situation and find remedies. Such ICT

projects should recognise that women are not a homogeneous group and information should be tailored to meet the needs of specific groups, e.g. young women, rural women, women in conflict zones, and women with disabilities. Members of the NGO CSW Geneva participated in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) both in 2003 in Geneva and 2005 in Tunis, on the digital divide between rich and poor countries. At the start of the Summit NGOs encountered difficulties gaining access to the Conference, but later they became very active participants. An NGO Gender Caucus tried to evaluate and monitor the impact of ICT developments on women. A remaining concern is that “the digital divide is also a gender divide”.

Violence against women

One of the principal areas of advocacy of the NGO CSW Geneva has been violence against women and protecting women's human rights irrespective of their culture, tradition or religion. In a statement to the Human Rights Council on economic social and cultural rights, Committee members made it clear that culture, tradition or religion should never be an excuse to violate women's human rights such as 'honour killings', early marriage, or other traditional practices detrimental to the health of women and girls.

In June 2008, Berhane Ras-Work, representative of the Inter African Committee, stated that all forms of violence against women should be treated as a criminal offence. While gradual improvements had been made in addressing honour crimes, dowry-related violence, acid attacks, racially motivated violence, marital rape, forced marriages, and other violations should be brought to the attention of the Human Rights Council and included in the Universal Periodic Review.

The role of men in balancing work and family responsibility

Reconciling work and family responsibility is the main challenge faced by women: it gives rise to discrimination as women are accused of inadequate work performance. However, this view is changing since many women are now in the labour force and continue to work during child-bearing age, contributing to family income. Many single-headed households have no choice as they are the sole support for their children. Increasingly women have become active in setting up small and medium sized businesses, which largely contribute to job creation.

Any redistribution of responsibility cannot be achieved without the support and involvement of men who must understand gender roles and related structural inequalities. Their share in parenting and other responsibilities are essential to relieve the burden on women as this affects their ability to access and retain work and also forces girls to drop out of school.

D. Change of Leadership in 2011 and new working methods

Whilst the working group structure had existed for many years, this system was questioned because of the large number of groups, which had been set up as new topics of concern emerged. Since most Working Group members were volunteers and served on different, but often related working groups, this workload became difficult to manage. Therefore, the incoming Bureau and new President in 2011 decided to review the way the Working Groups were structured and functioned.

On 12 October 2011, the Committee had its first “Strategic Planning meeting” under its new President, Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, Secretary General of the World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA). At this meeting discussions were held in small groups about how the committee's work could be structured more effectively. It was decided that the work of the Committee would be organised under five thematic forums: (1) Displacement and Migration; (2) Women's Health; (3) Violence Against Women; (4) Peace, Security and Justice; (5) Women's Employment and Economic Empowerment.

At a following Strategic Meeting on 5 December 2011, Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda gave her “President's Address” in which she paid a tribute to the outgoing Bureau led by the late Conchita Poncini. She felt honoured at being the first President from the Global South, specifically Africa.

She outlined her vision as 5 priorities;

1. Leverage and position the NGO CSW Geneva as a platform for resourcing the collective advocacy of women in their advocacy for women's rights and empowerment at the UN in Geneva;
2. Resource the work and have the space and infrastructure for coordinating the work supporting women's networks from outside Geneva for contact with policy makers;

3. Foster shared and inter-generational leadership;
4. Foster quality communication and improve ways of working;
5. Membership and partnership building.

The concept of initiatives was later introduced by the Vice-President, Astrid Stuckelberger (Representing both the Society for Psychological Study of Social Issues – SPSSI – and the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics – IAGG). She introduced a concept paper showing how work under the five thematic Forums could be carried out as ‘initiatives’, which were time-bound advocacy activities such as a publication, a statement or an event. It was agreed that ‘initiatives’ would replace the previous working groups.

Under this new system, the Committee has carried out more than 20 initiatives since 2011. Examples of these initiatives include a group formed on unpaid care work, women’s rights and poverty which co-hosted a side event on unpaid care work (MMM/INPEA), a side event on Traditional Values, Culture and Religion (IAC/WUNRN), monthly networking luncheons (WWSF/ IAC/MCDI/SCI, MMM), a reception for CEDAW members, International Day of Rural Women (World YWCA/WWSF), a side event for women migrants (MCDI/SCI), Position paper and Series of Advocacy Briefs on Violence against Women (World YWCA/WWSF/FAS/IAC), two ini-

tatives on women’s human rights education, one involving collaboration with the WG on Human Rights education (SGI/IFUW), Recommendations on Women’s health in conflict and post conflict situations (SPSSI/ IAGG/OCAPROCE/ World YWCA/MLP/ MCDI/SCI), a side-event on Harmful traditional practices: Rhetoric v Reality (IAC/WURN/MLP), a Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights Fact sheet (WILPF/MCDI/SCI/SPSSI/IAGG), another side-event on Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights (WILPF/SPSSI/IAGG/MCDI/SDI).

Members of the Committee also took part in the 16 days of activism against Gender violence campaign, the International Day on Zero Tolerance to FGM, and produced a Position Paper on a 5th World Conference.

After operating under this system for three years, the Committee plans to review this method of working. In 2014, the Committee mobilized to organize an NGO Forum for the Beijing+20 UNECE Regional Review.



Committee Lunch Meeting hosted by WWSF – Spring 2013



NGO CSW Geneva members holding various events and work sessions 2011-2013

CHAPTER 3

NGO CSW GENEVA CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WORLD CONFERENCES ON WOMEN

First World Conference on Women, Mexico 1975

The first UN World Conference on Women was held as part of the UN International Women's Year (IWY) in Mexico City in 1975 and was the largest ever gathering of women. Beside the main UN Women's Conference, 133 governments and 6,000 NGO representatives attended the parallel NGO forum, the International Women's Year Tribune. The organisation of this Forum was co-ordinated from New York through a joint planning committee involving the NGO CSW of New York, Geneva and Vienna.

The Geneva Subcommittee suggested that items on women workers, rural women and the status of women, as well as peace and disarmament be included in the programme. The Subcommittee also submitted input for the World Plan of Action to Mrs Bruce, Deputy Director of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. In addition, the President followed up with a letter to the UN Secretary General expressing her support for the first UN World Women's Conference and asked that NGOs be involved. The representative of the International Federation of University Women (Alice Paquier) was a member of the editorial team that produced a daily newspaper at the NGO forum to update participants attending both events.

The outcome of the First World Conference on Women was the adoption of the "Declaration of Mexico" which drew attention to issues such as the equality of rights and opportunities, child care, shared family responsibilities of men and women, women's right to work and earn equal pay for work of equal value, women's participation in development and women's role in promoting world peace.

After the first World Conference on Women, the UN declared 1976-1985 the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. This UN decade gave legitimacy to the international women's movement and put women on the global agenda. It led to a significant shift in thinking about women's role in development from being an opportunity to advance women's rights to a realisation that develop-

ment was impossible without women's involvement.

A Global Plan of Action was drafted to implement the objectives of the International Women's Year. This set out strategies for the advancement of women until 1985, identified literacy, vocational training, primary education, employment, urban and rural infrastructure, voting legislation, health and nutrition, marriage rights and participation of women in policy making as priority areas.

Second World Conference on Women, Copenhagen 1980

The second World Conference on Women was held in 1980 in Copenhagen, mid-way through the UN Decade for Women. The Geneva Subcommittee organised a special meeting at the ILO in 1979 to discuss plans for NGO participation together with its sister committee of New York.

At the Copenhagen Conference, the Geneva Subcommittee organised three seminars: one on the role of women and the mass media in education for peace (proposed by the working group on peace and disarmament to encourage collaboration between professional journalists and NGO representatives), the second on children as victims of apartheid (jointly with the NGO Subcommittee against racism and de-colonisation in Geneva, to promote the International Year of the Child), and the third focused on women and employment. These seminars took place in Copenhagen, immediately prior to the UN Conference so that the NGO recommendations could be presented to the UN Conference. Women from developing countries were encouraged to participate in the forum both as experts and participants.

Third World Conference on Women, Nairobi 1985

The third World Conference on Women, held in Nairobi in July 1985, marked the end of the UN Decade for Women. The Conference aim was to review and appraise progress made in achieving the

goals and objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women and to identify barriers. Three sub-themes, employment, health and education linked to the main themes of equality, development and peace were introduced.

Again a parallel NGO Forum was organised which overlapped briefly with the UN event. A planning committee involving around 60 international NGOs with a steering group was established. Four NGO planning subcommittees were set up in New York, Vienna, Geneva and Nairobi to plan and coordinate the conference arrangements. Whilst the forum convener and coordinator were from the NGO CSW New York, the NGO CSW Geneva was represented on the steering committee by Sonia Heptonstall (Sorooptimist), co-convener of the employment Subcommittee (with Alena Narocova from the World Federation of Trade Unions, Prague, Czechoslovakia), Edith Ballantyne (WILPF) as the Convener for Women and Peace, Anne Herdt, (International Council on Social Welfare) as Convener for Women's

Health, and Rudd van Hoogevest (World Council of Churches) and Genevieve Camus-Jaques (World YWCA) as co-conveners for Refugees/Migrant women. Berhane Ras-Work (Inter African Committee) organised a workshop in Nairobi on harmful traditional practices. Alice Paquier represented the NGO CSW Geneva in the steering committee, which also included the Chairs of the NGO CSW New York and Vienna. The NGO CSW Vienna led sessions on Young Women, Girls and Older Women.

Prior to the Nairobi Conference, the Geneva Subcommittee took part in pre-conference consultations in Vienna in October 1984, which were attended by 261 delegates (58 from developing countries) representing 99 organisations.

The outcome document from the third World Conference on Women was the 'Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women from 1986-2000', which set out concrete proposals to overcome the obstacles to the Decade's goals and objec-



Soweto village women - self help traditional dancers
at the Nairobi Conference 1985
Photo courtesy of Esther R. Suter



NGO Workshop on Latin America
at the Nairobi Conference 1985
Photo courtesy of Esther R. Suter

tives. Women's domestic role as wives and mothers, was identified as a major obstacle, since, whilst fundamental for the wellbeing of society, it is unpaid and undervalued. As they increasingly enter the labour force, women bear a double workload, and their domestic responsibilities prevent them from dedicating their lives to a career, which often confines them in low paid, temporary or part time positions. Factors preventing women's advancement in some countries include lack of adequate support services leading to poverty, which can threaten international peace and security.

Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995

The UN Fourth World Conference on Women was held in September 1995 in Beijing, China and was attended by 189 governments. The Conference brought together women and men to analyse the cross-cutting issues of equality, development and peace from a gender perspective. The Conference highlighted that societal progress and sustainable development were impossible without the advancement of women.

Almost 30,000 individuals attended the independent NGO Forum '95 held in Huairou, 50 miles from the main UN Conference in Beijing. Several representatives from the NGO CSW Geneva were present including Danielle Bridel & Simone Ovar (Zonta International), Irene Hoskins (International Council on Social Welfare), Berhane Ras Work (IAC), Edith Ballantyne (WILPF), as well as Krishna Ahoojapatel who was then representing INSTRAW. The 1995 NGO Forum programme was jointly drafted by the NGO CSW of New York, Geneva and Vienna.

The Geneva group was represented on the NGO Forum Facilitating Committee by Danielle Bridel, Chair of the Working Group on Women for the UNECE, who was responsible for coordinating and scheduling the activities

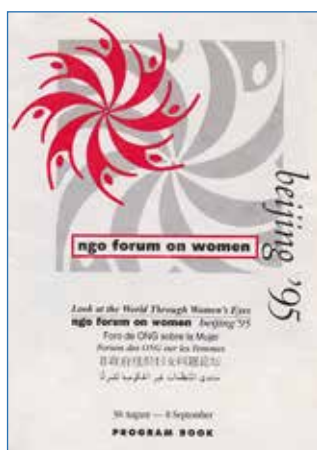
and events of the UNECE regional tent at the Beijing Conference. The UNECE Working Group also organised a regional cultural night, press briefings with the regional media coordinator, facilitated the lobbying process at the UN conference site, and encouraged government delegates to come to the NGO Forum in Huairou to give briefings and to engage in dialogue with non-accredited NGOs.

The outcome document of this 4th World Conference on Women's, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), incorporates recommendations from the three previous World Conferences on Women, and provides comprehensive guidance to governments, NGOs and other stakeholders for translating these recommendations into concrete actions. The BPfA identified 12 critical areas of concern:

1. Women and Poverty
2. Education and Training of Women
3. Women and Health
4. Violence against Women
5. Women and Armed Conflict
6. Women and the Economy
7. Women in Power and Decision Making
8. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women
9. Human Rights of Women
10. Women and the Media
11. Women and Environment
12. The Girl Child

The Geneva NGOs were amongst the 6000+ NGO representatives who took part in late night working sessions to influence the final wording of this historic declaration, which was adopted unanimously by 189 countries and has become the benchmark for the advancement of women's human rights.

The 4th Women's World Conference gave momentum to gender equality. It was in Beijing that the terms 'women's empowerment' and 'gender mainstreaming' emerged and women were seen as actors and agents of social and political change rather than victims of human rights violations.



NGO Forum booklet Beijing '95



4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995:

panel on Africa

Photo courtesy of Esther R. Suter



4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995: a group of women discussing an Amnesty International report

Photo courtesy of Esther R. Suter

Follow-up to the Beijing Conference

In 2000, the UN General Assembly held a 23rd special session to conduct a five-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, which was subsequently also reviewed in 2005 and 2010 during the 49th and 54th Sessions Commission on the Status of Women.

The NGO CSW Geneva participated in each of the reviews held every 5 years on progress made in implementing the BPfA recommendations, Beijing+5, +10, and +15 reviews. For each of these reviews, the Committee contributed to the UNECE Regional review process by convening NGO Forums in Geneva prior to the intergovernmental UNECE Meetings.

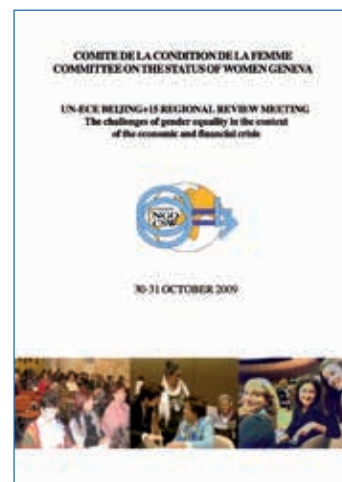
Organised in January 2000 by the Committee and its Working Group on Women in the ECE Region in cooperation with sub-regional networks and the UNECE secretariat, the NGO Forum Beijing+5 gathered around 650 participants from 51 countries in the Palais des Nations.

"There was one common line running throughout the meeting: NGOs asked their governments for a renewed commitment and show of political will to really go ahead and move towards full implementation of the Platform for Action and to adopt tools and targets to measure and monitor progress. They also asked themselves how they could help to foster the process of a needed change in mentality, so that society finally accepts women and men, boys and girls as persons of equal value. Time and again they stressed the need for more resources and closer cooperation between governments, NGOs, women's groups and other actors involved."

NGOs as partners on the way to accelerate implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action Report of the NGO Working Session, 17-18 January, Geneva (Organised in preparation for the ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 2000 Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action)

Similarly, NGO Forums were organized for the Beijing+10 and Beijing+15 UN ECE Regional Reviews, in December 2004 and in October 2009 also bringing together hundreds of women rights activists from all over the UNECE region.

The outcome reports and recommendations of each of these NGO Forums, organized in close collaboration with UNECE, were annexed to the UNECE intergovernmental meeting reports thus contributing vital Civil Society input to each global review process.



NGO Forum Beijing+15
Outcome document

In November 2014 the Committee will again host a three-day NGO Regional Forum organized in collaboration with the UN Economic Commission of Europe (UNECE) and a UN Women meeting in preparation for the global Beijing+20 review to be held in March 2015 at the UN CSW in New York.

The debate on a 5th World Conference on Women

The idea of a 5th World Conference on Women (5WCW) had already been discussed during the preparation of the Beijing+10 review, among NGO CSW Geneva members. Nearly 10 years later, Elly Pradervand (Women's World Summit Foundation – WWSF) has been advocating for the holding of 5WCW for the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Conference. WWSF was among the co-signatories of a joint Statement presented at the 55th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York calling for such a conference. In Geneva, WWSF launched an initiative to promote a 5WCW, and in 2012 it rallied a majority of NGO CSW Geneva members to issue a position paper calling for the convening a 5WCW in 2015 for the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform.

The Committee's position paper highlighted the need for such a world event to assess and celebrate the achievements in Women's Rights over the past decades. It also pointed to the fact that in the 20 years since Beijing, the world has profoundly changed, demographically, economically and technologically, creating new implementation gaps and challenges. Beyond the conference itself, a 5WCW would also require a mobilization effort over several years to bring back a transformative preparatory

process, and re-energize and sustain the women's rights movement, especially for younger women who did not have the chance to experience Beijing and previous Women's World Conferences.

Last but not least, no UN World Conference on Women has yet been held in the era of Internet and social media.

Many other NGOs however consider that given the current conservative backlash against women's rights: the risk is high for women to lose the normative gains made at the Beijing conference 20 years ago. Indeed, many also put forward the huge cost involved in the organization of such a conference.

So far, member States have not followed-up on the joint proposal for a 5th World Conference on Women made on 8 March 2012 by UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, and the President of the General Assembly Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser. Yet this proposal could still be taken up by a state, and lobbying efforts for a 5WCW continue.



CHAPTER 4

REFLECTIONS FROM PAST PRESIDENTS
AND LONG SERVING MEMBERS

This chapter contains five short contributions from past Presidents, officers and long standing members of the NGO CSW Geneva who have kindly shared some of their reflections and personal accounts of their involvement with the Committee and the UN system.

Looking back through the lens of a
peace organization

Edith Ballantyne (WILPF)

The UN General Assembly's decision in December 1972 to declare 1975 the International Women's Year galvanized member organizations of the Geneva-based Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Committee on Human Rights to form a subcommittee on the status of women with the mandate to facilitate and develop joint NGO activities in support of the Year.

This was in 1973. The international women NGOs who were members of the human rights committee, naturally fuelled the enthusiasm to make the Year memorable. They received support from the human rights committee as a whole and were strongly encouraged by its then chairman, Sean MacBride, whom I heard a number of times declare with conviction that men had made such a mess of things, that only women could save the world.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), which I represented in the Committee, had been working for the achievement of women's equal rights with men since its foundation in 1915. It considered the full and equal participation of women with men in all affairs of society, and of course particularly in matters of war and peace, as being essential for building a foundation for enduring peace, and was among the first to join the subcommittee's first Bureau. What followed were exciting times leading up to the International Women's Year and to the first world conference on women, held in Mexico City halfway through 1975. Among the outcomes of the conference was a call for a UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. Five months later, the UN General Assembly launched the Programme of Action for the Decade but not all wom-

en's organizations were happy with the issue of Peace being part of the Decade's programme.

Much has happened since then in the area of advancing the status of women worldwide. It was not always smooth sailing in the NGO world (nor in the world of governments). The Decade was launched at the height of the Cold War. The idea to form a subcommittee for the women's year came from the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), a worldwide women's organization, which defined itself as an anti-imperialist organisation and aroused suspicions in the minds of some of the other organizations about its political motivations in taking leadership of the Subcommittee. WILPF, with its emphasis on disarmament and peace as a major topic to be dealt with in the framework of the Year and the Conference and later in the Decade's programme of action, was not much appreciated either. Disarmament was seen as "too political" to be dealt with in the framework of equality between women and men, and peace, they felt, was already dealt with in other sectors of the UN and was better left alone.

In an effort to show that disarmament and peace were very much a woman's business, WILPF pushed for the establishment of a working group on the topic and volunteered to be its convener. Only a few women's NGOs joined. It was not until the third world conference on women in Nairobi in 1985, with the peace tent becoming a popular place and a symbol of the NGO Forum, that scepticism about peace having a place in the Decade began to wane. From then on more organizations became interested in women as peace makers and in conflict resolution. However, disarmament as a means of reducing dangerous arms, diverting resources spent on their production and the military to strengthening infrastructures to serve women and peace, was never quite accepted as an important concern of women. There were pleas to stop wars and armed conflicts raised by women, specially by African and Latin American women, who called for a halt to putting resources into wars and advocated putting them into development instead.

Nevertheless, the Subcommittee, now a full NGO Committee on the Status of Women, based in Geneva, made significant contributions to advancing women's rights in line with the plan of action adopted by the UN in 1975 and the Decade and the years following that. The NGO CSW Geneva is now preparing for Beijing plus 20 in 2015. Looking ahead, much still remains to be done to achieve full equality, development and peace.

Comité ONG de la Condition Féminine

**Jeannine de Boccard-Perréard,
Représentante permanente du Conseil
International des Femmes auprès
des Nations Unies depuis 1975.**

La Condition de la femme représente, depuis de nombreuses années, une préoccupation majeure des Organisations féminines nationales et internationales! Déjà du temps de la Société des Nations environ 25 ONG avaient cherché à obtenir une reconnaissance internationale de leurs revendications à plus d'égalité!

A Genève, comme à New York, Vienne et Nairobi le sujet était revenu plusieurs fois sur le tapis sans succès. Jusqu'au moment où furent créées, dans le cadre des différents Comités ONG des droits de l'Homme comprenant des groupes de travail spécialisés dont à Genève un «Groupe de travail sur la Condition féminine». Quelques années plus tard, ce groupe de travail a réussi, non sans quelques difficultés, à accéder au statut de «Substantive Committee» de la Conférence des ONG, la CoNGO.

A Genève comme à New York, faire reconnaître par l'ensemble de la société, la place de la femme, au même titre que celle de son pendant masculin, n'allait pas de soi.

A ce propos il convient de relever que ce groupe a pu bénéficier de l'appui de la CoNGO dans ses efforts ainsi que celui de plusieurs personnalités internationales dont Helvi Sipilä.

A l'heure actuelle Le Comité de la Condition féminine poursuit ses efforts pour arriver à l'égalité universelle entre femme et homme!

Note: Représentante permanente du Conseil International des Femmes auprès des Nations Unies depuis 1975. Licenciée en Droit, J. de Boccard, a travaillé au Département

Politique Fédéral (affaires étrangères) de 1946 à 1948, date de son mariage. A cette époque, les femmes mariées ne pouvaient pas continuer à être employées par l'administration fédérale. Par la suite elle a adhéré au CIF-ICW et a été désignée en qualité de représentante Permanente de l'Organisation auprès des Nations Unies.

My two terms as President of the NGO CSW Geneva

**Anne Fenton Herdt, Past President 1986-1991,
International Council on Social Welfare**

My two terms as president of the NGO Subcommittee on the Status of Women began amid the enthusiasm generated by the NGO Forum parallel to the UN World Conference on Women and Development held in Nairobi, Kenya in June, 1985; my terms ended as we prepared for the NGO Forum parallel to the 4th World Conference on Women and Development in Beijing, China in 1995. We met 3 times a year as the Subcommittee of the NGO Committee on Human Rights, meeting in the morning and the full committee in the afternoon.

We were a Subcommittee of the NGO Committee on Human Rights. Some suggested that we should be a free-standing committee, but I countered that women's rights were human rights and that we should remain under that umbrella. We women had to learn that if one of us made a point, the men present listened very politely and then continued the discussion as though nothing had been said. I arranged beforehand that whenever one woman made a point, that at least two other women would follow up to impress upon the men the point made.

1988 was the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and because our president that year was from Paris, the NGO meeting was held in Paris. President Mitterrand, aware because his wife Danielle was working on this NGO meeting, put the French government behind the celebration. After our NGO discussions, each evening those of us on the committee were entertained at the Parlement, and at the Residence of the Prime Minister. The final evening, a large meeting was held in the Palais de Chaillot, where the UDHR was adopted. This was followed by a memorable dinner at the Palais d'Elysee.

During the meetings celebrating the 40th anniversary of the UDHR held later in Geneva, I intervened

to refresh everyone's memory that it was the chair of the Commission, Eleanor Roosevelt, who had shepherded the document through the system to its final adoption by the General Assembly. The former head of the UN Human Rights Division during the creation and adoption of the Declaration, John Humphrey, was in attendance. He spoke with some vehemence about the fact that the women's insistence on having a separate commission meant that they were now "...off in Vienna!" while human rights continued in Geneva.

Thus, we were in the centre of human rights discussions. When we women wanted to make an intervention in UN meetings, we could garner the signatures of all members of the NGO Human Rights Committee, which carried far more weight. We also made our fellow NGO Reps aware of what concerns they, along with the UN, were leaving out of their deliberations. This was a period of many UN Conferences and especially, for us in Geneva, for many preparatory conferences. 'Prepcoms' were a time when governments listened and valued NGO input. Interventions in other meetings were not always given much attention by government delegates.

The UN was a men's club, among the government delegates as well as the leaders in the administration. It was a period where we devoted our efforts to making delegates aware of women's interests, needs and the importance of including them at every level of planning. We did not act like Abigail Adams, writing to her husband John who was among those developing the US Constitution: "...remember the ladies, dear". No, we developed strong interventions replete with facts. Sonia Heptonstall of Soroptimist International composed most of them.

How did we find our voice? Our Subcommittee had more than a dozen working groups each studying an area where we wanted to intervene. I must add here that the day I became president, our valiant secretary, Jeannine de Boccard (ICW) and I walked to a printing shop and ordered stationery with the women's Conference logo at the top and then a long list of the names of the working groups, their conveners and their affiliation. It stretched the length of the page. I handed the bill to the treasurer of the Human Rights Committee; I think it was the first time that the Subcommittee cost the NGO/ICHR any money and that was a message.

I felt, having earlier been the Committee's English secretary, as well as the Convener of the WG on Health, that the working groups were the backbone of our committee. In each small group, we studied how human rights were implemented – or not – in what was to become our area of expertise. Our larger committee meetings centred on reports of these working groups informing those present of the progress and potential of a group to make a difference in human rights. Of course, the major part of the work was done by individuals outside of meetings.

The Prepcom for United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio (UNCED) was our first experience and the heightened interest brought by the New York activist, Bella Abzug to our NGO Prepcom meetings. She impressed the delegates as well as the NGO Reps with her fervour and ideas. One evening, I had both Bella and Wangari Maathai to dinner on our terrace. The contrast between quiet Wangari and outspoken Bella was delightful as we all planned together to insure the inclusion women from the beginning.

We participated in Prepcoms for the UN Conference on Human Rights, and some of us attended the Conference in Vienna. Geneva is also headquarters for many agencies: the International Labor Organization, The UN High Commissioner of Refugees (HCR), the World Health Organization. The WHO was of great concern as health is central to the wellbeing of women and children. We followed as well the rising concern for the spread of HIV/AIDS. We helped to make the HCR aware that most refugees were women and children, but the agencies plans revolved around the needs of men. We benefited from the assistance of the staff in the section devoted to women in WHO.

In Geneva, we participated in the annual Commission on Human Rights as well as its Subcommittee where Berhane Ras-Work, of the Inter-African Committee, convinced the delegates to accept her recommendations for a resolution (she wrote) for the elimination of Traditional Practices harmful to women and children, particularly female genital mutilation. Through her tireless efforts and the Subcommittee's support, this resolution was accepted by the Commission. With her constant effort, she wrote resolutions that were accepted by UNICEF, WHO, the HCR and finally the UN General Assembly.

This is a stunning example of how NGO efforts can make a real difference in the lives of many across the globe by highlighting areas where governments need to act. It was also adopted by the African Commission and many regions and governments.

We followed as well the Commission on the Status of Women that then met annually in Vienna. On one occasion, I handed a resolution, written by Sonia and adopted by the Commission on Human Rights to a delegate during a welcoming reception. She gained the Commission's adoption of this resolution on disaggregating statistics, which I then took to New York. It was received with excitement by those working in statistics: another occasion when we Reps helped the different parts of the UN to know what other parts of this vast bureaucracy were doing. We were regularly in New York for CEDAW sessions, the treaty body for the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, as well as for the many treaty bodies that met in Geneva.

As the president, I wanted to create a sisterhood. One of my first attempts was to suggest that, as we met in the morning, that no one present should ever have to go to lunch alone. I had also seen that some of the "old hands" were disappearing without recognition, so we instituted a "Vin d'Honneur" to praise the women while they were still alive to appreciate it. I also established that the Working Groups were autonomous, not subservient to the Committee's officers.

To mark the 5-year period after the Nairobi Forum, Kay Fraleigh, president in New York and Marlene Parenzan, president in Vienna, and I, friends from having been members of the NGO Steering Committee for the Forum in Nairobi, arranged a meeting in Vienna. Each participating NGO was given money to bring 2 grassroots members to the meeting. My task was to raise that money from interested governments. This way, the individual NGOs were responsible for those they had invited, not us. The meeting brought many women from different parts of the world together to share experiences and thus was a valuable experience.

For the planning for the Forum in Beijing, I managed to secure 8 computers, printers and the appropriate software, a donation from Hewlett-Packard, so that each region and NGO CSW and headquarters would be able to communicate rapidly and easily the plans

for the Forum. I also hoped that this electronic networking would continue after the Forum.

These were very satisfying years for me, though my involvement continued. Being president was almost like a full-time job with reports, planning, travel, speeches and meetings. I believe that I helped to empower many women through their participation in small and large meetings. We spread opportunities throughout the group and helped women to grow in leadership. We taught men and women to use the terms: "men and women". We raised awareness among participants that women and children and their needs had to be included in consultations from the beginning.

The head of the UN Office in Geneva and also of the Human Rights division, Jan Martenson, never really knew my name; he addressed me as "Ms. Woman" for he knew what I was about.

A Contribution to the History of the NGO CSW Geneva

Renate Bloem, Past President 1997-2000, World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women, now representing Civicus

Looking back at 1997 when I was elected and privileged to take over the Presidency of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women Geneva gives me a moment of happy reflections. It was a time when the women of the world still bathed in the incredible achievements of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, a time of "Aufbruch", excitement and of expectation for transformative change. This feeling was also reflected in a heightened commitment of our Committee towards sharpening the profile of women and girls' human rights and gender equality, in particular in the realm of interface with relevant UN mechanisms.

The Committee at the time grouped together some 80 national and international organizations. We had developed a structure of issue-based working groups allowing each organization to bring out its specific expertise. Committee members attended regularly the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York (CSW) and the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva (CHR).

We were very ambitious to push for increased gender mainstreaming and to establish broader inter-



Renate Bloem, NGO CSW Geneva President, at the Beijing+5 UNECE Regional Review meeting in January 2000
(Photo from UNECE – unece.org)

action between those two UN mechanisms to give greater importance to the human rights of women. We thus were very proud when our advocacy succeeded in the Chair of the CSW being included into the Opening of the HRC where she reported on the just ended CSW. And beyond, we had joint reports from the OHCHR and SG/DAW on topical issues.

During the sessions of the HRC, the Committee organized daily Women's Caucus Briefings to allow networking, sharing and joint advocacy with women from around the world pouring to the HRC to advance women's and girls' human rights in all areas.

Also in my time fell the Beijing+5 review process, the first litmus test for where we were with the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for this event was held in Geneva with a preceding two-day NGO working session. The Committee and its Working Group on Women in the UNECE Region were tasked to organize this session, in cooperation with sub-regional networks and the UNECE Secretariat. I recall still the excitement, the work intensive preparations for and outcome from these events. The UNECE

Executive Secretary, Yves Berthelot, and his Senior Advisor, Patrice Robineau, honored the Committee, writing that the success of the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting was mainly due to the well-prepared and constructive interface of NGOs with the UNECE Governmental meeting which so far had been unprecedented and could be a model for future UN meetings. This was clearly a highlight during my time as President.

Yet, I also recall here my disappointment with the Final Session of the General Assembly in New York on Beijing+5. There was not much interaction with NGOs. What I clearly heard was a huge implementation gap between the promises in Beijing and the reality 5 years later. I said then: "Four World Conferences on Women have brought forward impressive changes on the statute books, but changes in custom, tradition and mentalities are slow. The gap between de jure progress and de facto reality widens". Others said: "The laws might have well been written on the moon".

So, in writing these few words, I ask myself: where are we today with the implementation? Women are again preparing, this time for Beijing+20, and I am happy to see the Committee getting involved. But is there still excitement and expectation, or have women achieved so much that all is taken for granted? The former UN Commission on Human Rights has been upgraded to become the Human Rights Council with impressive high-level panels on women and gender issues on the agenda. But again, are the women of the world still pouring to these events? There is also no longer any interaction with the UN CSW in New York.

I was privileged to speak recently at the Istanbul Summit on "Women's Perspectives on the UN Post 2015 Development Agenda". The Summit had gathered a good number of high-level UN Officials, Governments, MPs and more than 400 CSOs, mainly from developing countries. The outcome was clear: it articulated general principles in support of the Beijing Platform for Action with women's empowerment as the cornerstone of sustainable and inclusive development. Yet, the Summit was also clear in emphasizing the increased role of Civil Society in the process of formulating the new goals, their implementation and the monitoring of progress.

In conclusion, what I see is a slow shift in global governance where civil society, including women, dissatisfied with their governments and also with global institutions, claims more and more inclusive and effective participation in any new decision-making affecting their own life. The UN begins to understand and I trust our Committee will claim and occupy its role and space.

An open letter to Conchita Poncini

Ursula Barter-Hemmerich, INPEA

Dear Conchita,

We miss you so much, you went too soon and you left a big void. No one has been able to take your place in defending the status of women and speaking up for women's rights.

You never missed an opportunity to raise your hand at any UN meeting to defend women's rights and put them on the agenda. We certainly have progressed but there is still a lot that has to be done and we should all follow your example and be truly courageous – we must be the ones to tell the world that real equality has not yet been achieved.

You had built up an extraordinary network, everyone in the UN System knew you and this is how you were able to muster support for your projects and obtain the necessary funding. An excellent example was the 30th Anniversary Celebration Forum you organised in Geneva on 21-22 July 2003. I thought you started very late and I doubted that you would make it – I was wrong. You brought excellent speakers from all over the world and it turned out to be a great success – we were able to publish a booklet on the proceedings.

I was the Secretary of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women during your Presidency and also the Secretary for the Committee on Women and Employment, which unfortunately has disappeared with the new organisation of the Committee. We did some excellent work on unpaid work and other important issues and are working to revive this important committee.

You drafted, often during the night hours, innumerable statements for the Commission on Human Rights and the HRC, as well as ILO and other meetings which were all well researched and documented and which other NGOs were happy to sign. Your



Conchita Poncini

legal background and expertise gained at the ILO were no doubt very useful.

You were criticised, of course, as all active people are, but I often said to those who were critical that when they had accomplished half as much as you had, they would be entitled to criticise. I was right because no-one

followed in your footsteps and became such a staunch and committed defendant of women's rights.

Although we may not have always agreed, we were able to discuss matters in a friendly way in order to find the best solution and the most appropriate way of wording any text you put forward. We truly miss you Conchita and we are still waiting for someone as energetic and committed as you in defending the rights of women here in Geneva and everywhere.



NGO CSW Geneva members celebrating Leila Siegel's 90 anniversary birthday (photo courtesy of Krishna Ahoojapatel)

"I wish to thank the women and men leaders who have encouraged us by writing inspiring messages to continue with our mission to bring the status of women on an equal level as men. The process is long and the task formidable, but as the President of the First World Conference of Women said, "It only takes a little longer to do the impossible". We count on the commitment of our members and the solidarity of our donors, sponsors and friends to help us shorten the time and process in reaching our goal, a goal that could only enhance spiritual and human values, social cohesion, economic prosperity of society and justification for all".

Conchita Poncini, President NGO CSW Geneva

THE MAGNA CARTER OF OUR TIME

Anne Herdt, Past President 1986-1991, International Council on Social Welfare

It was a cold, rainy December 2008 evening, hardly auspicious for a festive occasion. But, it was the 60th anniversary of the adoption by the United Nations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the crowd was there, a tent with heating had been erected to accommodate them, and the dignitaries were in the front row: the mayor of Geneva, the Foreign Secretary of Switzerland (who was the president last year and would again become president next year), Mary Robinson, the former High Commissioner of Human Rights and other prominent human rights experts. Filling the other rows were friends and colleagues, many from the NGO Committee on the Status of Women of which I was a member and countless other participants.

The Mayor of Geneva spoke, extolling the efforts of women; the Swiss Foreign Secretary spoke, hailing the work of Eleanor Roosevelt; the leader of the Task Force spoke with her words turned rapidly into French by her daughter who stood at her side. As we left the podium, the Mayor rushed up to offer a huge bouquet.

Immediately afterwards, the Foreign Secretary, Micheline Calmy-Rey, and I unveiled the 5-foot high plaque which pictures Eleanor Roosevelt reading the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. A document which she was instrumental in creating and then shepherding through the various UN bodies for 24 months to its adoption by midnight on December 10, 1948. She spoke that evening calling it "the Magna Carta of our time." The delegates stood as one to applaud and to honour her achievement. But, few people know this about modest Eleanor Roosevelt.

There were to be 3 events that evening in 2008, our unveiling of the plaque honouring Eleanor Roosevelt for her leadership in the development and adoption of the Universal Declaration, followed by – happily indoors – a discussion among leading human rights experts chaired by Ms. Robinson. The evening culminated with a re-

ception offered by the city of Geneva, "home of human rights." By the door, guests could take, on their departure, a bilingual booklet about Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights prepared by our Task Force, but the printing paid for by the Swiss Federal government.

It was an exhilarating evening for those of us who had worked, even struggled, for 20 months to experience this reality. Finally, recognition was offered to the memory of Eleanor Roosevelt who, as chair of the Commission on Human Rights had surmounted the Cold War antagonisms, the cultural roadblocks and honest differences to create a document that most could ascribe to, and those who differed, because of her powers of persuasion along with their respect for the chairperson, abstained rather than voted against the Declaration.

Our achievement would never have been possible without the backing of the Swiss Federal Government. The Foreign Secretary, Micheline Calmy-Rey sent a representative for she wanted to see that the role of Eleanor Roosevelt was properly acknowledged. The High Commissioner of Human Rights sent a delegate to our meetings, but when she learned that the plaque was to honour one individual, not the entire Commission, she withdrew the delegate. Our regular meetings with the Geneva government were cancelled. We were then informed that the Genevans as well wanted the entire Commission on Human Rights to be honoured.

We used this time to raise money for the plaque; we are indebted to Odile and George Gordon-Lennox for securing the funds... and so much more. Helene and I visited the graphic artist and worked out the design for the plaque. Our own NGO CSW was silent all of this time and the Task Force was reduced to a handful, for only those who would work were welcome.

The US Embassy volunteered help, but I did not want this to be an American thing, for Eleanor, and the document that she ushered into being, belong to the world. Still, they sent over Allida

Black, editor of the Eleanor Roosevelt Papers who was very welcome, and the Embassy produced a book on Eleanor Roosevelt, which they distributed. Eleanor was a Democrat, and President Truman was followed by a Republican, not interested in extolling a Democrat and especially a woman. She has not been properly honoured in her own country, to this day. But, there is a plaque honouring her historic achievement in Geneva!

One day in the fall, I received a phone call that one of the Geneva councillors would meet with us that evening. I enlisted my French-speaking friend Odile, not only for her help with the language, but because she is a natural diplomat and understands the Geneva culture. About 14 people sat around this long table and the councillor announced that we are going to arrive at a solution together. He too wanted the plaque to honour more people, not just Eleanor Roosevelt.

We carefully explained that this plaque was for the Chair of the Commission on Human Rights. He wanted to replace the photo of Eleanor Roosevelt with the Declaration with one of the whole Commission and had invited the graphic artist with photos. None, however, were suitable. Then, he suggested that the members be named... difficult, as the Soviets sent a different delegate to each meeting. We settled then on listing the members and nationalities of the Drafting Committee.

That meeting with the councillor, while long, tense and difficult, actually improved the plaque! Many authoritarian governments like to claim that the Declaration is a Western creation, but there on the plaque are the names and nationalities of men from China, Lebanon, Chile, etc.

I asked that the plaque for Eleanor Roosevelt be first in the row facing the gates of the UN in Geneva, and he accepted. This is a prime spot, and fitting: despite all of the great achievements in her eventful life, Eleanor Roosevelt considered the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to be her legacy. Before the ceremony, the plaque was attached to the 5-foot concrete panel and draped.

By this time, I was exhausted; I had begun this quest just as I finished radiation therapy. It was a long slog and only my determination to honour this able and admirable woman kept me going despite the hesitation of the Geneva authorities, the need to raise funds and the abstention of the HCHR. We were a few volunteers who accomplished this. When I needed rest, it was Helene Herdt and Odile who carried the project through until the film and the brochure were done.

Odile organized with the Geneva Department of Education to order many booklets and to include them and the study of Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in all of the history and international relations classes.

My daughter Helene worked tirelessly with a film director and together they conceptualized and produced an excellent 8-minute document entitled: "Celebrating Eleanor Roosevelt." This video also includes some old films from the period.

Helene also served as the art director for the 22-page bilingual booklet on Eleanor Roosevelt selecting many photographs from the Franklin & Eleanor Roosevelt Institute's library. Helene inserted the photos and captioned the text written by John Sears of FERI entitled: "Eleanor Roosevelt and the Declaration of Human Rights." His work was generously offered by FERI as their contribution to our efforts.

We had the English text translated into French for the bilingual booklet. Catherine Richemont, a graphic designer, served as editor of the booklet. The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs financed the printing and made the booklet available at the reception that evening. Paula Daeppen and her organization FAWCO put the Geneva ceremony on the Internet.

Both are available on the Internet: <http://eroos-eveltudhr.org>. From the plaque to the final brochure and film, all of it was made possible by our donors.



Anne Herdt (right) and Berhane Ras-Work with the plaque in Geneva

CHAPTER 5

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Over the years, the NGO CSW Geneva has developed relationships with various UN institutions, including several of its Specialised Agencies, Governments, other NGOs and Civil Society Networks, as well as its sister Committees in New York and Vienna.

Influencing global policy

The NGO CSW Geneva is well placed to meet with Government representatives in permanent missions, the UN Secretariat and other NGOs. Its members have regularly delivered (often joint) oral and written statements to the Commission on Human Rights, now the Human Rights Council, and addressed many intergovernmental meetings organized by the UN.

Relationship with the NGO CSW New York and Vienna

The Geneva NGO CSW enjoys good relations with its two sister Committees in New York and Vienna. Although the three Committees have been working together at annual meetings of the UN CSW in New York and other international gatherings such as the regional meetings and World Conferences, the committees operate independently.

Occasionally the NGO CSW Geneva, New York and Vienna have issued joint statements, such as in September 2008 at the Women's and Girls' Caucus at the DPI in New York, where the three Committees jointly reaffirmed that women's rights, gender equality and discrimination be addressed using the CEDAW criteria. They called for better liaison between the human rights mechanisms and the Commission on the Status of Women and requested more financial resources to promote human rights education for women and girls. The adoption of a life span perspective for the health of women and girls was encouraged and it urged for better use of complaints mechanisms and monitoring procedures.

The NGO CSW Geneva and UN Reforms

Over the years the Geneva NGO CSW has responded to UN reforms including on human rights and pro-



NGO CSW Geneva members at the NGO Consultation Day organized by the NGO CSW New York during the UN Commission of the Status of Women in March 2014.
Top Photograph: Simone Ovar (with Soon Young Yoon, President of the NGO CSW New York, on the left)
Bottom Photograph: NGO CSW Geneva members attending the NGO Consultation Day (Photos courtesy of Esther R. Suter)

tection systems, requesting that the technical cooperation and advisory services of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as the expert body of the UN in the field of human rights, help countries to set up human rights promotion and protection mechanisms-especially for women. It is vital for human rights protection systems to have constitutional legitimacy and adequate funding; they should be permanent and independent bodies that are not subject to political change.

The Committee recommended that more women experts, as well as NGOs, participate at all levels of UN

reform efforts. NGOs could also be more involved in designing projects and evaluating missions, given their expertise. As to the effective functioning of the human rights mechanisms, the NGO CSW Geneva called for improvements of UN gender focal points and for better gender analysis. It further stated that gender mainstreaming would not be possible without sufficient gender analysis and training on gender mainstreaming for all UN staff. Government human rights mechanisms and NGOs could also benefit from such training. This requires political will and adequate financial and human resources.

In 2008 the Committee, led by Krishna Ahoojapatel as President, published a booklet on "Gender Equality and Development: Transitions in the UN", which discussed gender equality in the context of the transition from the Commission on Human Rights to the Human Rights Council. The booklet drew on Dr Ahoojapatel's experience of women's equality, as the UN Deputy-Director of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).



Gender Equality and Development: transitions in the UN

over the years by high ranking UN officials including successive High Commissioners for Human Rights (such as Mary Robinson at the UNECE seminar in Warsaw), representatives of the World Bank, the Director General of the World Health Organisation, High level representatives of the ECE, Director General of the ILO, to name but a few. Its unwavering commitment and achievements are all the more remarkable considering that most members are volunteers and the Committee itself operates on a minimal budget.

Selected quotes

"On behalf of the ILO Director General, Mr Juan Somavia and the ILO, I would like to congratulate the committee's advocacy work for gender equality and advancement of women. We very much appreciate the Committee's valuable inputs to ILO efforts to promote decent work for women in equal partnership with men. The ILO also greatly values the Committee's contributions in helping to advance the mainstreaming of gender and gender equality in the ILO by its active presence in our meetings and other advisory activities. The Committee's concerns are our concerns. We count on it for helping to continue our common work for social justice, economic development and gender equality".

Linda Wirth, Acting Director of Gender Bureau, ILO
In her speech at the NGO CSW 30th anniversary celebrations in 2004

Relationships with the UN and Recognition of the Committee's contribution by UN officials

Over its forty years of existence, the NGO CSW Geneva has developed relationships with several UN institutions that have strengthened from the development of mutual respect and trust to collaboration. Both sides have reaped benefits from working together on matters of mutual concern, notably women's human rights and gender equality. There are many good examples of close collaborations, such as with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on women's employment rights for over four decades and with the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) since the 1990s.

The Committee's many contributions to the advancement of women's human rights have been recognised

"I would like to extend to the NGO Committee on the Status of Women my congratulations on the work you and your member organizations do to advance gender equality and women's participation in decision making in all areas relevant to improving the lives of girls and women. In particular, I acknowledge the important work carried out related to the women's health. The organizations of the Committee help create important bridges between the World Health Organization and the girls and women on whose behalf we work. These links allow us to work more effectively to improve the health of girls and women around the world".

Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director General,
World Health Organization*

* The Subcommittee has collaborated with the World Health Organisation in Geneva on many women's health issues from female genital mutilation and women's sexual and reproductive health to the health of older women

"I am proud that UNFPA has been closely working in partnership with the NGO Committee on the Status of Women in Geneva, to bring visibility to the realities of gender inequality which have direct and often malign consequences for women's health and education and for their social and economic participation. Your Committee and its 10 Working Groups, Task Forces and Special Projects, should be congratulated for your energy, courage and foresight in building a coalition of over 60 NGOs that advocates in a very comprehensive manner within the UN system, women's human rights, gender equality and development and the participation of women in decision making in all areas relevant to improving their lives....."

..." I therefore commend you for your advocacy to influence governments to respect the commitments they have made at world conferences and your efforts to bring women into the mainstream of development emphasising partnership between women and men."

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid,
UNFPA Executive Director

"The NGO Committee on the Status of Women has been essential in breaking traditional frontiers and in changing the course of a complex and delicate debate on gender equality. It is in this Committee where we can hear that in a society where a woman has never been discriminated against, exploited or abused, denigrated, or subject to violence, she will give birth and life to communities and nations – and will construct a future – without violence, discrimination, abuse or denigration. It is also here in this Committee where one understands that the future debate on gender and development will not be located only at the surface of our needs or material desires (though essential) but at the most profound level of our existence and human transformation: a transformation that must not become a source of more gender inequality but become a human compass to guide the humanization of development thinking and practice."

Alfredo Sfeir Younis,
Geneva Special Representative to the UN and the
WTO, World Bank Geneva 1996-1999

CHAPTER 6

HOW FAR HAVE WE ADVANCED ON GENDER EQUALITY?

The basic human rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and adopted by in 1948, apply to both women and men, wherever they live in the world, irrespective of their nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, or any other background affiliation. Yet almost 70 years after the adoption of these universal standards, inequalities between women and men persist in most societies in terms of their roles and responsibilities, vulnerability to poverty, disease and access to health services, earning potential and job opportunities, training and education, access to and control over resources, and participation in decision-making.

While many definitions exist for gender equality, UN Women refers to it as “The equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys”. UN Women states that inequality between women and men is not just a human rights issue; it is also a critical element for sustainable people-centred development. Given the importance of gender equality, gender mainstreaming was put forward as a strategy for achieving gender equality in the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995. With gender mainstreaming, equality is central to all policies, actions and programs. It is also recognized that gender equality cannot be achieved without the commitment and involvement of men and boys. In his 2013 annual report, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon states that gender inequality still prevents millions of women from exercising and enjoying their fundamental human rights.

The NGO CSW Geneva, together with many other civil society organizations, has fought for gender equality in all spheres of women's lives for more than 40 years through lobbying at UN meetings and capitalizing on informal networking opportunities with government delegations, permanent missions, grassroots organizations and other civil society partners to get its message across.

After four decades of advocating for women's human rights, does the NGO CSW Geneva still need to fight for gender equality?

In assessing where we are today and how far we have come on gender equality, it is useful to refer to recent global reports, which have used different indicators to analyse the advancement of women's human rights and gender equality.

Assessment of the MDGs – 2013 UN Secretary General's Report and 58th Session of the UN CSW

The UN Secretary-General's report published on 1 July 2013 evaluating progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) clearly shows that gender equality is far from a reality for millions of women around the world. Whilst progress has been made in poverty reduction, universal education and access to health, the report states frankly that some MDG targets will not be met by 2015. MDG Goal 3 for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment was unmet as of 31st January 2013. This is reflected in worldwide statistics for women's representation in parliaments, which is on average only 20%. MDG Goal 4 on maternal health is also unmet but is vital as the health, well-being and survival of mothers and their babies depend on receiving quality care during pregnancy and delivery. The Secretary General points out that far too many women still die in childbirth, even though these deaths are preventable. While acknowledging that the coverage of antenatal care in developing countries has increased, 50 million babies are still delivered without skilled birth attendants.

The Secretary General is convinced that gender inequality is a major obstacle to women's participation in decision-making. One example of inequality is seen in women's unpaid work, which is an important indicator of women's integration into the economy. Women earning a regular income have greater autonomy because their dependency on other family members is less, giving them greater control over their personal development and decision-making. However, the report shows that while women's decision-making ability in the home is

changing, important household financial decisions are still made by men because men control the family's resources and because of discriminatory laws on inheritance and asset ownership rights. Another example is that although more women have enrolled in tertiary education over the past 40 years, overall this has not changed women's labour market opportunities.

These facts were echoed at the 58th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women: its agreed conclusions adopted on 21 March 2014 recognize that *"almost fifteen years after the launch of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), no country has achieved equality for women and girls, and significant levels of inequality between women and men persist [...] Overall progress for women and girls across all the Millennium Development Goals remains slow and uneven, including on Millennium Development Goal 3 – Promote gender equality and empower women –, both within and between countries" and "lack of progress on gender equality has hindered progress towards all of the Millennium Development Goals."*

World Development Report 2012

The World Development Report 2012 on Gender Equality and Development, an influential World Bank publication based on in-depth research and analysis, found that improvements in education over the past 25 years have increased literacy rates among girls and women. Progress in achieving gender equality on the other hand has been variable from extremely rapid changes occurring in some areas to very limited progress in others. The 2012 World Development Report recommended that gender equality becomes a core development objective in its own right, as it is "smart economics" leading to increased productivity, improved development for the next generation and increased institutional representation.

Priority areas identified in the report include reducing female mortality and closing remaining education gaps, improving access to economic opportunities for women, increasing women's voice in the household and in society and minimizing the perpetuation of inequality. The report recognizes that whilst higher incomes alone cannot reduce gender gaps, focused policies can have a real impact.

Despite global efforts to change the status of women through enforcing international agreements, women are still denied their basic human rights. Over half a million women die each year from pregnancy and childbirth-related causes, and worldwide, women are twice as likely as men to be illiterate and suffer from gender-based violence and disabling diseases. The HIV infection rate amongst women aged 15-24 is rapidly increasing and now represents the majority of new infections.

Despite improvements in women's wages in the 1990s, women still earn less than men, even for similar work. In addition, many of the countries that ratified CEDAW still have discriminatory laws on marriage, property and inheritance.

WEF Global Gender Gap Index

In 2006 the World Economic Forum developed the Global Gender Gap Index to measure gender equality and progress in 110 countries. The gender gap is important as it affects national competitiveness. The report states that since women represent half of a country's potential talent base, a nation's competitiveness will depend on the education and integration of women. In 2013 the gender gap in 136 countries was measured based on economic, political, education and health-based criteria. The report found persisting gender gaps across and within regions: the majority of countries covered had made only slow progress towards closing the gender gap.

Beijing+20 review

Progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) across the world is another major indicator for the advancement of women's human rights and the achievement of gender equality. Published in 1995, the BPfA incorporates the commitments made at the three previous UN World Women's Conferences as well as at other UN meetings. The BPfA provides a comprehensive roadmap for the achievement of gender equality, which was agreed upon and adopted by most countries in 1995; yet twenty years later, its recommendations have still to be fully implemented in many countries as we approach the Beijing+20 review in 2015.



UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, with NGO CSW Geneva members in January 2014

The Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, recently met with NGO CSW Geneva members to present her vision for the Beijing platform for Action and to listen to NGO concerns. She called on all stakeholders to continue the fight for women's human rights, highlighting shocking statistics on violence against women, including the fact that over 600 million women today live in countries where rape is still not considered a crime. Violence against women remains a major concern, taking different forms – physical, psychological, economic and sexual, such as the use of rape as a weapon of war. Regrettably however, most of this violence occurs in women's own homes. Since gender inequality is a root cause of such violence, it is critical that both violence and gender equality be addressed.

The findings from these global reports clearly show that gender inequality is still a major problem. They offer encouragement in how far we have come but a stark reminder of how far we still have to go. Harnessing women's full potential is critical for future global social and economic development.

In 1945 when the United Nations charter was adopted in San Francisco, it already included a commitment to women's rights even though only four of the 160 charter's signatories were women. At the first meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in London in February 1946, Eleanor Roosevelt read an open letter addressed to the women of the world encouraging their participation:

"...we call on the Governments of the world to encourage women everywhere to take a more active part in national and international affairs, and on women who are conscious of their opportunities to come forward and share in the work of peace and reconstruction"...

Her words remain just as valid today.

CHAPTER 7

NGO CSW GENEVA: ACHIEVEMENTS,
FUTURE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The NGO CSW Geneva has accomplished remarkable work on advocacy for gender equality since its founding in 1973 to support the UN in promoting women's human rights and gender equality. When the 1975 International Women's Year was extended to the UN Decade for Women and followed by three World Women's Conferences, culminating in the Beijing meeting in 1995 with its Platform for Action, the Committee's mandate was expanded to continue to engage with the United Nations' system. Given the magnitude of the challenge, the Committee's achievements must be viewed in the context of a larger global endeavour on gender equality to improve the lives of millions of women around the world.

NGO CSW Geneva contributions to advancing women's human rights

The NGO CSW Geneva and its sister committees in New York and Vienna are the only CoNGO Committees devoted exclusively to women's human rights.

Ability to form strategic coalitions

The Committee's ability to form strategic coalitions of NGOs with a shared vision for gender equality has been a major catalyst for its achievements as it gave women the opportunity to speak with one voice, representing many millions of women who suffer violence and discrimination in accessing education, health, employment, and ownership of property and assets.

Raising the profile of women's issues at the UN

The status of women is no longer invisible as society has become politically sensitive to the causes and consequences of abusive treatment of women and gender inequality. The mere presence of the NGO CSW Geneva and its sister committees in the UN represent a major achievement as it has been difficult for NGOs to gain access to UN decision-making and still remains an on-going challenge. The Committee has helped raise awareness on issues such as female genital mutilation and violence against women and has helped place them higher on the UN agenda.

Access to and engagement with influential policy makers

The Committee engages with policy and decision makers at the highest levels in the international arena, from the High Commissioner on Human Rights to Ambassadors and Heads of UN Agencies to Special Rapporteurs on Violence Against Women and others matters relating to women.

Ability to intervene on many substantive topics

The Committee brings together women from diverse backgrounds (women with unique grassroots knowledge, lawyers, academics, representatives from faith based organisations and policy experts), each contributing her specialist knowledge and competence. These varied backgrounds have enabled the committee to increase the depth, breadth, reach and sophistication of its advocacy activities and intervene on a broad range of substantive topics to influence international policy.

The Committee as an interface between grassroots women and the UN

The Committee builds bridges to span the divide between women at the grassroots level and the decision making power at the UN. It draws attention to discrimination and violations against women's human rights at country level and equally shares information with its national affiliates to determine how changes at the global level affect them.

Contribution to all Four Women's World Conferences

The Committee has contributed to all four Women's World Conferences as delegates and in the planning of the NGO Forums, which have run parallel to the main UN Conferences. It has provided input to the documents resulting from the UN Conferences, including the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA).

The Committee also contributed input to the subsequent reviews of the BPfA, i.e. the Beijing+5, +10, and +15 reviews by organizing NGO Forums in conjunc-

tion with UNECE Regional Preparatory meetings in 2000, 2004 and 2009. The Committee is currently preparing for the Beijing+20 review.

Advocacy tools for use at national and international level

Advocacy tools such as the Glossary of Terms on Violence Against Women, the booklets on the Girl Child and A Girl's Right to Live, as well as the recent Series of Advocacy Briefs produced by the Committee's working groups have helped raise awareness of women's and girls' issues at both national and international levels. These advocacy tools are tailored to local communities, cultures and languages, and also help increase understanding.

Pioneering research and awareness raising

Awareness raising is a major element of the Committee's work. The Committee has engaged in fact finding missions on issues such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) at a time when it was a taboo subject which no-one wanted to address. Since the late 1970s, in partnership with IAC, WHO, UNICEF and other organisations, the Committee has helped change global awareness on this controversial issue. This pioneering work led to an important follow-up under the leadership of Berhane Ras-Work, who set up the Inter-African Committee (IAC) to address FGM in 29 countries.

The Committee also helped raise the profile of the Girl Child at the UN and globally. Major concerns for girls were, in addition to harmful traditional practices such as FGM, child labour, forced and early marriage, prostitution and trafficking. The committee has produced several publications and background papers on the girl child.

A stepping-stone for women

The Committee has been a training ground for women peace and human rights activists such as Homayara Etemadi, herself an Afghan refugee in Switzerland, who promoted women's role in peace building, and now works for the Afghan President. Bineta Diop, Femmes Africa Solidarité Founder and President, who has served on the Peace Working Group for many years, was nominated in 2014 as a Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security by the African Union General Assembly. Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, current NGO CSW Geneva President and General Secretary World YWCA, was recently appointed as

the African Union's Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriage. The BANGWE project has grown in strength under Colette Samoya as a field project in the African Great Lakes Region to promote the role of women in peace building.

Facilitates timely information exchange

The Committee operates an efficient communication system, which has allowed the rapid dissemination and exchange of information vital for its advocacy work. Its electronic Listserv and website keeps a hundred or so members' representatives informed on women's human rights developments, meetings of the UN and its Agencies as well as its own meetings. Members in turn use the system to share information. Its efficiency was shown in February 2014 when an email sent out at 8pm in the evening for a meeting the following lunchtime, drew a full house to a last minute meeting with the new Executive Director of UN Women.

High quality joint statements to the UN and elsewhere

The Committee fostered high quality Joint Statements delivered to the Human Rights Council, the former Sub Commission on Human Rights, the UN CSW, CEDAW, the ILO and UNCTAD conferences and events, to raise women's concerns. It has also hosted joint events with the UNECE, UNICEF, OHCHR, WHO, the ILO and other organisations to help advance women's human rights.

Global momentum leadership for the advancement of women's human rights

Since 1995 it has encouraged the implementation of the BPfA, including the ratification of relevant UN conventions, beginning with CEDAW

UN resolutions Influence

It has successfully influenced the wording of resolutions (e.g. on the girl child and FGM) and has had its recommendations accepted by the ILO's International Labour Conference.

Networking and mentoring facilitation

The Committee's networking activities from informal lunches and seminars for committee members to dinners with members of Treaty Bodies such as CEDAW have provided informal opportunities to



CEDAW Session in Geneva – Photo Courtesy of Valerie Bichelmeier

improve relationships, promote information sharing and understand how to contribute more effectively to the work of the UN.

The NGO CSW Geneva is intergenerational, with older and experienced member representatives, some of them over 90 years old, mentoring interns and younger members with less experience and knowledge. The Committee is also a great place for new comers to learn about the UN System, women's human rights and gender equality.

Increases participation of women from Africa and Eastern Europe

One of the Committee's major contributions to advancing women's rights and gender equality has been to increase participation of women from different continents in international gatherings; some of them co-hosted with the two other sister committees in New York and Vienna, as well as parallel NGO forums providing opportunities for dialogue with UN secretariat and Government delegations.

Efforts were also made to increase participation of NGOs from Eastern Europe, Africa and other developing countries through financing of travel costs. Through sponsorship from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) the NGO CSW Geneva was able to invite NGOs from Africa, Asia/Pacific, Latin America/Caribbean and Europe to attend its Forum in 2003.

Challenges faced by the Committee

Internal Challenges Facing the Committee

The current economic recession has made funding for the Committee's activities difficult, especially financing women in developing countries to participate in global events and producing publications.

In addition, the Committee has greatly benefitted from the experience of long-serving members; however, as many are now in their 80s and 90s, recruiting enthusiastic new members and transferring knowledge and expertise from longer serving members to them is essential.

Human rights challenges

Despite forty years of advocacy, many human rights violations still prevail and there is no end in view for the Committee's advocacy work. Future advocacy challenges include asking full implementation of the BPFA, changing cultural attitudes, prejudice and stereotypes of millions of people in the world who perpetuate practices harmful to women and girls. Finding effective ways to counter the growing levels of violence against women and extending the legal protection offered by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to all is another challenge as well as protecting women's rights to work and recognising unpaid work

Other challenges are changing stereotypes about men and women's traditional roles to allow more

equal sharing of parenting and family responsibilities. Social security protection and other safety nets for women are often non-existent, without forgetting the challenge of empowering women to change their self-image and, increasing their presence in scientific and technical fields.

More women are needed in political and economic decision-making roles and this requires a variety of measures, including temporary quotas as some countries have done. A major concern of the Committee is bringing the changes agreed at the international level to the local population to benefit grass root women. New technology, such as social media provides both a challenge and an opportunity: it is a valuable tool for sending out human rights messages to the next generation but it requires proficiency and accessibility.

Conclusion

As the Committee looks to the future, many challenges lie ahead. Nevertheless, it remains optimistic about future opportunities to further advance women's rights as a strong collective force of international NGOs, with large national and international networks. Whilst the changes so far have been slow, they are significant and do still represent progress.

2015 is the appropriate time to set a new social and human rights agenda, which is more consistent and relevant to women of the 21st century.

The Committee will continue to advocate for women's human rights and their equal access to health-care, employment and equal pay for equal value, social security, technology, land ownership, credit and lifelong education and training. It will also continue to promote prevention on violence against women and harmful traditional practices with its partners. Based in Geneva, home to the Human Rights Council and many UN Agencies, it has an important role to play in making women's voices heard to improve the lives of women all over the world.

As Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary General stated at the NGO Liaison briefing session on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (October 2013, Geneva): "You understand, like no one else, the daily challenges faced by the most vulnerable. You have the passion and networks to spread our messages far and wide".

EPILOGUE

THE GENEVA NGO FORUM FOR THE BEIJING+20
UNECE REGIONAL REVIEW – NOVEMBER 2014

The 20 year review of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) or Beijing+20 was the topic of much debate and the NGO CSW Geneva was among the few organisations that sustained a call for a robust civil society involvement including the holding of a 5th women's conference. There was a resistance to this position in view of the strong conservative voices pushing back on women's rights and the budgetary implications for such a global gathering. But it is with this quest for reclaiming the necessary space for women's organisations and civil society in a shrinking policy space that the NGO CSW Geneva started preparing for the NGO Forum Beijing+20 UNECE Regional Review.

Almost 700 women's rights advocates from 50 countries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region and beyond^{*}, representing more than 300 organizations from civil society, the UN system, governments and other stakeholders^{**} gathered on 3-5 Nov 2014 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva for this 20 year review of the implementation of the BPfA in the UNECE Region, under the motto

"act | advance | achieve | women's rights"

* UNECE countries represented: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan – Non UNECE countries represented: Australia, Egypt, Kosovo, Mexico, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates

** Civil Society Organizations included international organizations (e.g. FAWCO, International Alliance of Women, International Federation of Business & Professional Women, Soroptimist International, IFUW, WILPF, World YWCA, ZONTA International), Regional Organizations (e.g. European Women's Lobby, the Karat Coalition, Women in Europe for a Common Future), as well as national and local grass-root organizations Participating UN entities: UNECE, UN Women (Headquarters, Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, National office Georgia), CEDAW, ILO, ITU, OHCHR, UN NGLS, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNRISD, WHO, WMO, World Bank Government represented: Canada, Finland, France, Israel, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Turkey Academic, Research Institutes and Private Sector organizations: e.g. AT&T, Boston University, CERN, CISCO Systems, Geneva Graduate Institute, International Organization of Employers.



Geneva NGO FORUM - Beijing+20
UN ECE Regional Review

3-5 November, 2014

Palais des Nations - Geneva, Switzerland

act | advance | achieve | women's rights

<http://beijing20.ngocsw-geneva.ch>

These numbers probably make it the largest event ever organized by the NGO CSW in Geneva. The high level and geographical and cultural diversity of participants and speakers, the extremely well organised logistics, supported by more than adequate funding, generous in-kind sponsoring and substantial collaboration, make it probably also the most successful event of its kind.

During the three-day meeting, interactive roundtables were organized to examine progress on the 12 critical areas of concern of the BPfA, recognizing advances made on women's rights and gender equality in the 20 years since the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, but also discussing the existing gaps and challenges, and pointing to critical emerging issues impacting women and girls. New cross-cutting and emerging women's issues brought on by a world that has changed profoundly since 1995 were also addressed in interactive roundtables: the human rights of migrant women, women and ageing, Science, Technology and Innovation for the advancement of women, as well as the role of men and boys.

Sub-regional perspectives, women as agents for change, the future women and girls need and how to make it happen were also discussed at high-level plenary sessions. And a call for transformation by Dr Erwin Lazlo brought a new perspective on the urgent imperative for gender equality. An advocacy / lobby session was also organized for participants planning to attend the intergovernmental UNECE Beijing+20 review meeting that was held 6-7 November 2014.



Opening Session of the NGO Forum Beijing+20 UNECE Regional Review
3-5 November 2014, Room XVII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Outcome

A clear consensus emerged that there has unfortunately been a definite backward trend on women's rights in some areas. The underlying cause of this reversal of gains is notably attributed to the recent financial crisis. Austerity and other measure responses to the global economic downturn have been largely gender insensitive and have thus resulted in higher unemployment for women than men, less educational opportunities, reduced access to health-care and social services, and also a persistent and pervasive violence against women.

The Forum outcome document, the "Geneva NGO Forum Declaration & Recommendations", was presented jointly by Manjit Dosanjh, Chair of the Editing Committee, and Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, NGO CSW Geneva President and Forum Chair, at the end of the NGO Forum, and also on the following day at the opening session of the UNECE Intergovernmental Review meeting, together with a slide-show on the Forum.

In addition to the declaration itself, the Forum outcome document offers detailed recommendations on what must be done to further the implementation of the BPfA, to advance women's rights and gender equality, and to achieve what women and girls need and want. These recommendations, which are the direct result of the 16 interactive roundtables held during the Forum on the 12 critical areas of concern and 4 emerging issues, are structured in 10 clusters:

1. Women's Rights are Human Rights: Accountability and Resource
2. Violence Against Women and Conflict: Building a Culture of Peace
3. Poverty, Economics and Social Development: Money Matters
4. Participation and Decision-Making: Shifting Power
5. Environment and Climate Justice: People and Planet
6. Human Rights and Migrant Women: Together in Solidarity

7. Women and Health: Wellbeing for all
8. Girls, Ageing and Intergenerational Justice: Building a Common Future
9. Education, Science, Technology and Innovation: Transformation for All
10. Media and Communications: Breaking Stereotypes

The final version of this outcome document also integrates contributions received from participants after the Forum. A slightly shortened version is included in the UNECE official document.

The Geneva NGO Declaration and Recommendation was published as a 16-page booklet with graphics and pictures and was launched at a lunch reception at the Palais des Nations in February 2015. This outcome document was presented at the 59th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York, where it was also largely distributed:

- At the NGO Forum Consultation Day on 8 March 2015 where Simone Ovar, Forum Co-Chair was invited as a speaker to present the NGO Forum and its outcome;



- In a CSW session during the high level panel on the results of regional Beijing+20 meetings of the United Nations Regional Commission during which Valerie Bichelmeier, NGO CSW Geneva Vice-President, delivered an oral statement on behalf of the Forum Chair.

The NGO Forum also acted as a catalyst for networking, and a new informal group was formed by young women participants who assembled as a “Young Leader Caucus”. This new group organized a side-event on Women Migrants at the UN CSW in March 2015 in New York, which was sponsored by the Committee.

Support

The Geneva NGO Forum Beijing+20 was first and foremost the result of extraordinary mobilization from NGO CSW Geneva member organizations, whose representatives gave their time, resources and expertise. A Task Force was set up under the leadership of Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda (World YWCA), NGO CSW Geneva President and Forum Chair, with Simone Ovar (ZONTA International) as co-chair. Working Groups were established for Substantive issues (Chair: Elly Pradervand, WWSF), Logistics (Chair: Arielle Wagenknecht, OCAPROCE), Outreach, Communication & PR (Chair: Simone Ovar, ZONTA International), and Finances & Sponsoring (Chair: Sara von Moos, FAWCO). An editing committee was also formed under the leadership of Manjit Dosanjh (IFUW) that produced the Forum outcome documents.

The NGO Forum was also the result of strong partnerships and fruitful collaborations with other organizations and individuals from civil society, the UN System and governments, in particular with the UNECE, as well as UN Women (both its New York headquarters and its Europe and Central Asia Regional office in Istanbul).

The NGO CSW Geneva is most grateful to its financial sponsors, in particular to the Forum's main sponsor, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, as well as to the State of Geneva, the City of Geneva, UN Women and the Permanent Mission of the United States in Geneva. Financial support made sponsorships possible for about 60 participants and speakers, notably from lower to middle income countries of the UNECE region (Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova Tajikistan, Ukraine & Uzbekistan).

Other forms of inestimable support were also received from the Permanent Missions to the UN in Geneva of Canada and the Netherlands, as well as generous in-kind donations from individuals. The NGO Forum even had its own theme song – “Maybe it's you”, which was performed live with a piano in Room XVII!

The challenge is now to sustain the momentum and build on the success of this Forum to continue our work in the spirit of our motto: act | advance | achieve women's rights and gender equality.

Valerie Bichelmeier (Make Mothers Matter),
NGO CSW Geneva Vice-President,
April 2015

APPENDIX 1

NGO CSW GENEVA STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

The work of the NGO CSW Geneva is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted in 1948. As many of the principles contained in the UDHR have since been codified into legal international treaties and conventions, the Committee seeks their ratification and full implementation by governments.

Structure

The NGO CSW Geneva is a membership-based organisation representing the collective interests of more than 40 national and international NGOs and women's organisations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Commission (ECOSOC).

The Committee has a strategic position at the United Nations that allows it to influence international policy making in areas such as social and economic reforms, the human rights of women, as well as economic and trade issues. Its principal aim is to attain gender equality in all aspects of women's lives through a shared vision of its members. It works to mainstream a holistic and integrated human rights based approach to gender equality.

Throughout its history, the Committee has campaigned to keep women's issues high on the global agenda through mainstreaming, using statistically supported, fact-based, rational arguments, analyses and grassroots knowledge to lobby governments. The Committee forms strategic NGO alliances and collaborates with other organisations to increase its reach and authority. It confronts sensitive and taboo subjects through awareness raising and changing cultural attitudes. It seeks long-term solutions through consensus building and working in partnership with governments, UN institutions, civil society and other NGOs.

Governance

The Committee operates under a set of Rules, which provide structure and guidance for its smooth running.

From 1973-2001, the NGO CSW Geneva existed as a Subcommittee of the CoNGO Special Committee on Human Rights and operated under its Rules. In December 2001, under the leadership of its President, Conchita Poncini, the Subcommittee voted in favour of changing its status from Subcommittee to a full substantive Committee of CoNGO. This arrangement would allow the Committee to pursue its own activities to advance women's human rights while retaining its association with the CoNGO Special Committee on Human Rights. The NGO CSW Geneva drafted its own rules in 2003, revising them twice in 2008 and in 2012 to reflect new activities and external factors.

Aims

Under its 2012 rules, the Committee's aims are to:

- Engage with the UN system to raise awareness and action on the status of women;
- Maintain a global momentum for gender equality through advocacy and strategic lobbying;
- Exchange information among committee member organisations and provide a platform for strategizing;
- Bring diverse voices from the field to international platforms;
- Use committee members' expertise to share analysis of trends, needs and good practice.

Engagement with the UN

The NGO CSW Geneva actively participates in the three annual sessions of the Human Rights Council (successor of the Commission on Human Rights), including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and its Special Procedures that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. The Committee also holds women's human rights caucuses during Human Rights Council sessions.

The Committee follows the sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which reviews the implementation of the 1979 convention by signatory countries. The Geneva Committee aims to strengthen relationships with CEDAW Committee members through informal exchanges such as seminars and dinners, in order to become better acquainted with its work, and so make more timely contributions.

Central to its work since 1995, the Committee has been advocating for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) recommendations for improving women's rights, adopted by governments at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. It also contributes to the work of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the principal UN body promoting gender equality and women's empowerment at the global level. The UN CSW evaluates annually global progress on gender equality, identifies obstacles, sets global standards and formulates policies to promote gender equality and empowerment of women worldwide. At its annual sessions in New York, representatives from the NGO CSW Geneva work with representatives of its sister committees in New York and Vienna to provide joint input. Civil society participation in UN CSW sessions is coordinated by UN Women, the Secretariat that supports the CSW.

Several other International conferences, world summits and declarations have influenced the Committee's work including the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna (where the expression 'women's rights are human rights', was coined) and the 1994 Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, which covered sensitive issues related to population, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Committee follows developments in regard to the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000) which supports the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into peace support operations and the participation of women in all aspects of peace processes.

Also important to the Committee's work are the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of measurable goals and targets to promote gender equality, combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy and envi-

ronmental degradation, which were endorsed by all UN Member States in 2000 with a target for achievement in 2015. In 2013, Committee members participated in a one-day conference organised by the UN NGO Liaison Office in Geneva to discuss the post-2015 agenda and its envisioned Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and have continued since then to provide input on this important topic.

Methods of work

Although the Committee as a whole meets regularly in Geneva, its substantive work has been carried out in independent, smaller working groups. These groups are established to work on a substantive topic, which is consistent with the Committee's aims. These working groups were dynamic, being periodically formed or disbanded depending on the Committee's priorities at that time. The Committee also formed task forces to carry out projects with a limited mandate, which would disband once the project had been complete. More recently, the Committee has been working through initiatives, that allow for small groups to be formed more dynamically around a project (side-event, statement, advocacy material and other activities) and thus fostering dynamic participation. The work and achievements of past working group and initiatives is described in Chapter 2.

As a Committee, the NGO CSW Geneva cannot sign statements, but where appropriate, it generates such joint statements, providing ample opportunity for members to provide input and co-sign as individual NGOs. Written and oral statements are thus regularly delivered on behalf of member organisations in various UN Conferences and other meetings.

The participation of NGOs is actively encouraged by UN Women, CEDAW, and the Human Rights Council, as constructive dialogue with NGOs is crucial to the UN's work.

Funding

The Committee's activities are funded through membership fees, which are set at the Annual General Meeting. It also engages in fundraising for special events such as conferences and publications.

Executive Bureau

The Bureau of the Committee normally consists of six members, elected for 3 years. The President is elected in her personal capacity whereas in the case of the two Vice-Presidents, two Secretaries (if possible one French-speaking, one English-speaking) and the Treasurer, it is the organisations which are elected, not the individuals. The Bureau coordinates the work of the Committee, ensures that the Committee's rules and procedures are adhered to and that the budget is appropriately managed. It accepts responsibility for the running of the main committee meetings, including the recording of the minutes and their circulation.

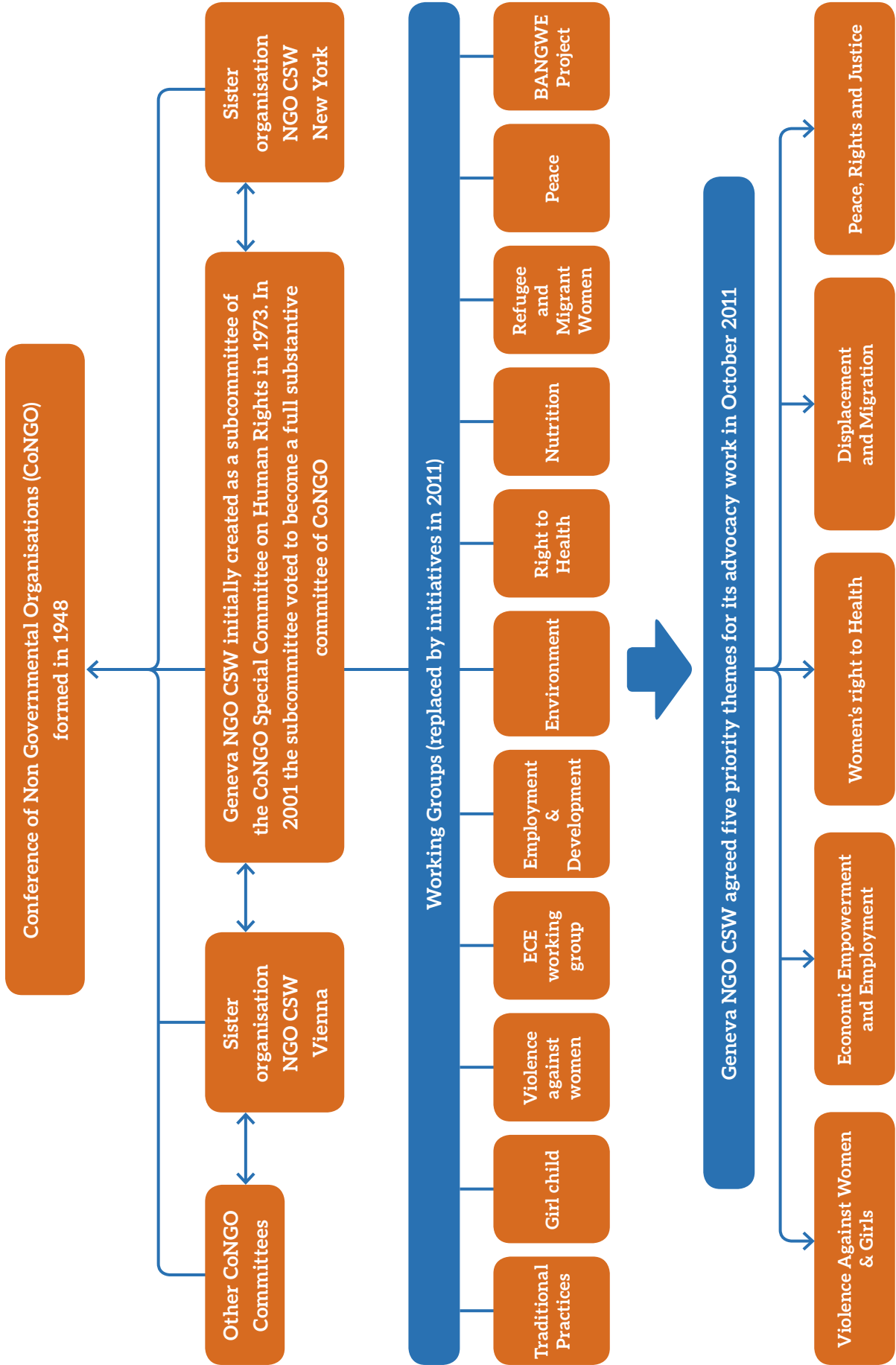
In addition the Committee manages an electronic email distribution list, which keeps around 100 NGO representatives informed. This list acts as a vehicle for alerting members of important upcoming events as well as to promote solidarity and galvanise support among NGOs.

The NGO CSW Geneva also hosts a website, www.ngocsw-geneva.ch, with information about its own meetings and activities, membership information, photos, archived reports and statements.

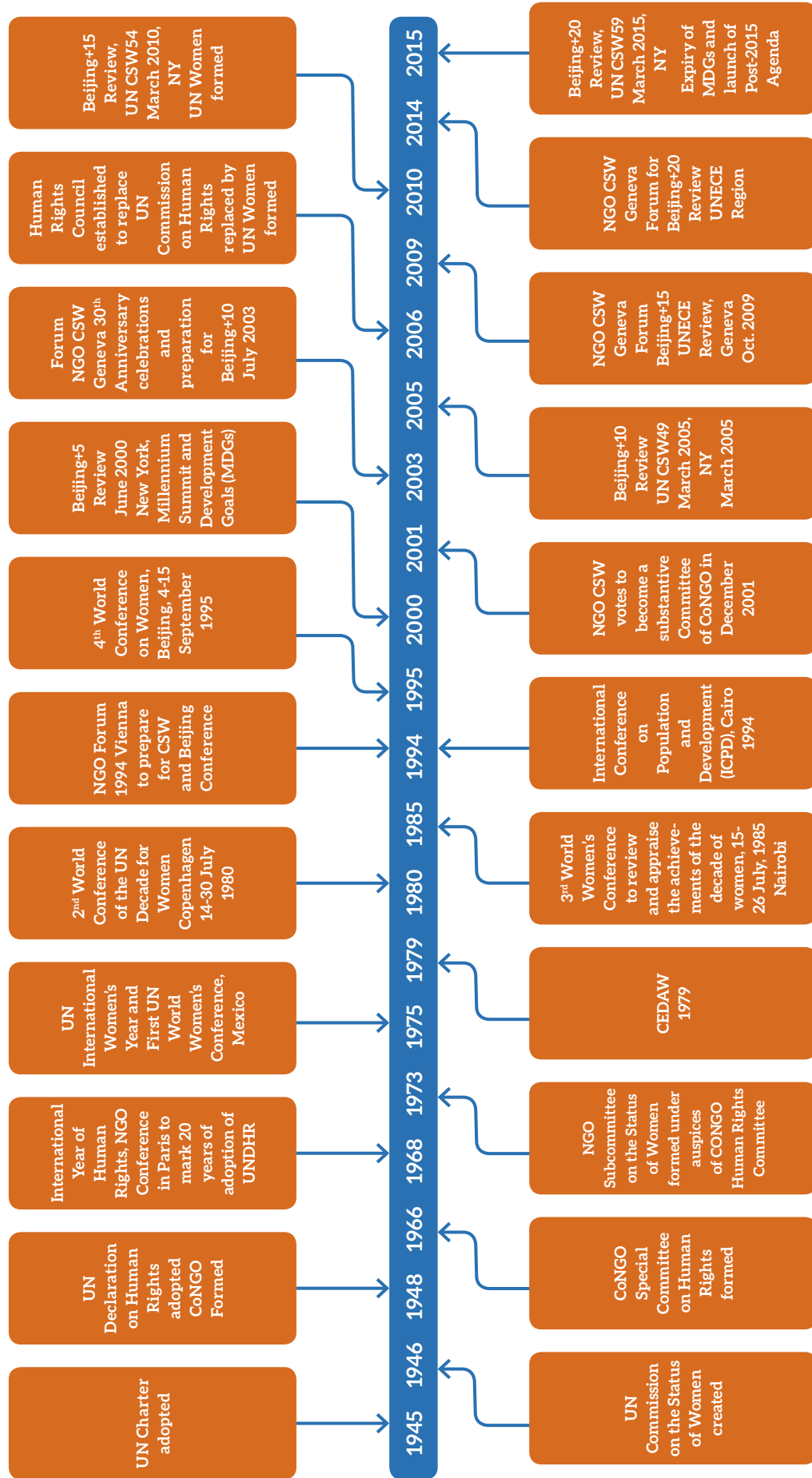
Communication with Members and Others

Communication and information sharing is a crucial element of the Committee's work. In order to serve its members and other interested parties, it acts as a gateway for the exchange of up-to-date information. This is achieved through committee meetings and working groups, roundtable discussions and panel sessions.

NGO CSW Geneva Organizational Chart



APPENDIX 2

ORGANISATIONAL TIME LINE SHOWING MAJOR EVENTS
INFLUENCING THE HISTORY OF THE NGO CSW GENEVA

APPENDIX 3

LISTING OF PAST NGO CSW GENEVA
BUREAU MEMBERS

2014-Present	<p>President: Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, World YWCA</p> <p>Vice-Presidents: Federation of American Women's Club Overseas (FAWCO), Sara von Moos, and Make Mothers Matter (MMM), Valerie Bichelmeier</p> <p>Secretaries: Soka Gakkai International (SGI), Hayley Ramsey-Jones, and Inter African Committee (IAC), Adebisi Adebayo</p> <p>Treasurer: Salvation Army, Sylvette Huguenin</p>
2011-2014	<p>President: Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, (World YWCA)</p> <p>Vice-Presidents: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Krishna Ahoojapatel / Madeleine Rees, and Society for Psychological Study of Social Issues / International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG), Astrid Stuckelberger</p> <p>Secretary: Make Mothers Matter (MMM), Valerie Bichelmeier</p> <p>Treasurer: Salvation Army, Sylvette Huguenin</p>
2008-2011	<p>President: Conchita Jimenez Poncini, IFUW</p> <p>Vice-Presidents: WILPF, Edith Ballantyne / Krishna Ahoojapatel, and Zonta International, Simone Ovar</p> <p>Secretaries: Women's Federation for World Peace International, Carolyn Handschin, and International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, Ursula Barter-Hemmerich</p> <p>Treasurer: Solar Cookers International, Joyce Jett</p>
2004-2008	<p>President: Krishna Ahoojapatel, WILPF</p> <p>Vice-Presidents: Inter-African Committee (IAC), Berhane Ras-Work, and World WYCA, Nathalie Fisher-Spalton</p> <p>Secretaries: International Council of Women, Sylvie Perret, FAWCO, Laurie Childers and International Inner Wheel, Linda Dubosson,</p> <p>Treasurer: Women's International Zionist Organisation, Rama Enav</p>
2001-2004	<p>President: Conchita Jimenez Poncini, IFUW</p> <p>Vice-Presidents: International Council of Women, Brigitte Polonovski Vauclair, and WILPF, Krishna Ahoojapatel/Silvi Sterr</p> <p>Secretaries: Zonta International, Danielle Bridel, and World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations, Ursula Barter-Hemmerich</p> <p>Treasurer: International Alliance of Women, Erika Bopp</p>
1998-2001	<p>President: Renate Bloem, World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women</p> <p>Vice-Presidents: International Federation of University Women, Conchita Poncini, and WILPF, Barbara Lochbihler, replaced by Michaela Todd in 1999</p> <p>Secretaries: Zonta International, Danielle Bridel & Baha'I Intl. Community, Giovanni Ballerio</p> <p>Treasurer: International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Nicole Piaget</p>

1995-1998	<p>President: Irene Hoskins, American Association of Retired Persons</p> <p>Vice-Presidents: World Federation of Methodist Women, Renate Bloem, and International Council of Jewish Women, Leila Seigel</p> <p>Secretaries: Associated Country Women of the World, Joanna Koch, and Zonta International, Danielle Bridel</p> <p>Treasurer: International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Nicole Piaget</p>
1992-1995	<p>President: Irene Hoskins, International Council on Social Welfare,</p> <p>Vice-Presidents: International Council for Jewish Women, Leila Seigel, and International Council on Social Welfare, Anne Herdt</p> <p>Secretaries: Zonta International, Danielle Bridel, and La Leche League International, Joanna Koch</p> <p>Treasurer: International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Nicole Piaget</p>
1988-1991	<p>President: Anne Herdt, International Council on Social Welfare</p> <p>Vice-President: International Council of Jewish Women, Leila Seigel</p> <p>Secretaries: International Council of Women, Jeannine de Boccard and All India Women's Conference, Mala Pal and Baha 'i International Community, Giovanni Ballerio</p>
1986-1988	<p>President: Anne Herdt, International Council on Social Welfare</p> <p>Vice-President: International Council of Jewish Women, Leila Seigel</p> <p>Secretaries: International Council of Women, Jeannine de Boccard, All India Women's Conference, Mala Pal & Baha 'i International Community, Giovanni Ballerio</p>
1983-1986	<p>President: Alice Paquier, IFUW</p> <p>Vice- President: International Council of Jewish Women, Leila Seigel</p> <p>Secretaries: International Council of Women, Jeannine de Boccard and All India Women's Conference, Mala Pal</p>
1980-1983	<p>President: Alice Paquier, IFUW</p> <p>Vice-President: International Alliance of Women, Irmgard Rimondini</p> <p>Secretaries: International Council of Women, Jeannine de Boccard, and All India Women's Conference, Mala Pal</p>
1977-1980	<p>President: Katherine Strong, World YWCA</p> <p>Vice-President: International Alliance of Women, Irmgard Rimondini</p> <p>Secretary: International Council of Women, Jeannine de Boccard</p>
1973-1977	<p>President: Schahnaz Alami, Women's International Democratic Federation</p> <p>Secretaries: International Council of Social and Democratic Women, Renée Chavanne, and International Council of Women, Jeannine de Boccard (joined the Bureau in 1975).</p> <p>Other Bureau member: WILPF, Edith Ballantyne</p>

APPENDIX 4

LIST OF PAST AND PRESENT NGO CSW
GENEVA MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

The table below lists organisations that over the years have been members of the NGO CSW Geneva and is not meant to be exhaustive.

1. Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation
2. Al Hakim Foundation
3. All India Women's Conference
4. American Association of Retired Persons
5. Amnesty International
6. Anti-Slavery Society – ASS
7. Arab Lawyers' Union
8. Asia Pacific Forum on Women Law and Development – APWLD
9. Associated Country Women of the World – ACWW
10. Association for the Prevention of Torture – APT
11. ATD Quart Monde
12. Baha'i International Community
13. Bangwe & Dialogue
14. Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University
15. Catholic International Union for Social Service – CIUSS
16. Christian Peace Conference
17. Commission on the Churches on International Affairs – CCIA
18. Conference of European Churches – CEC
19. Consumers International
20. Dominicans for Justice and Peace
21. Education International
22. European Union of Women – EUW
23. Federation Internationale des Droits de L'Homme / International Federation of Human Rights – FIDH
24. Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas – FAWCO
25. Federation Syndicale mondiale – FSM
26. Femmes Africa Solidarite – FAS
27. Franciscans International
28. Friends World Committee for Consultation – FWCC
29. General Arab Women Federation – GAWF
30. General Union of Palestinian Women – GUPW
31. Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition – GAIN
32. Global Fund for Women
33. Human Rights Advocates – HRA

34. Indian Law Resource Centre
35. Institute of Development Studies – IDS
36. Institute of Planetary Synthesis – IPS
37. Inter African Committee – IAC
38. International Abolitionist Federation – IAF
39. International Alliance of Women – IAW
40. International Association for Counselling – IAC/IRTAC
41. International Association for Social Progress
42. International Association for the Defence of Religious Liberty – AIDLR
43. International Association of Democratic Lawyers – IADL
44. International Association of Penal Law / Association Internationale de Droit Pénal – AIDP
45. International Baby Food Action Network – IBFAN
46. International Catholic Migration Commission – ICMC
47. International Christian Organisation of the Media (formerly International Catholic Union of the Press) – ICOM
48. International Commission of Jurists – ICJ
49. International Cooperative Alliance – ICA
50. International Council of Jewish Social and Welfare Services – INTERCO
51. International Council of Jewish Women – ICJW
52. International Council of Nurses – ICN
53. International Council of Social Democratic Women
54. International Council of Social Welfare – ICSW
55. International Council of Voluntary Agencies – ICVA
56. International Council of Women / Conseil International des Femmes – ICW-CIF
57. International Federation of Business and Professional Women – IFBPW
58. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies – IFRC
59. International Federation of Resistance Movements / Fédération internationale des résistants – FIR
60. International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres – IFS
61. International Federation of Social Workers – IFSW
62. International Federation of University Women – IFUW
63. International Federation of Women Lawyers – IFWL
64. International Inner Wheel
65. International League for the Rights & Liberation of Peoples
66. International Longevity Centre Global Alliance – ILC Global Alliance
67. International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse – INPEA
68. International Organisation for the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination – EAFORD
69. International Organisation of Journalists
70. International Peace Bureau – IPB
71. International Planned Parenthood Federation – IPPF

72. International Press Institute – IPI
73. International Service for Human Rights – ISHR
74. International Social Service – ISS
75. International Union of Students – IUS
76. International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations – ISMUN
77. International Baccalaureate Organisation
78. ISIS International
79. Isis Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange – Isis-WICCE
80. IUS Primi Viri International
81. Kennedy Centre for International Studies – KCIS
82. Kundalini Yoga
83. Lutheran World Federation/Women in Church and Society – WICAS
84. Make Mothers Matter (formerly Mouvement Mondial des Mères International) – MMM
85. Medical Care Development International – MCDI
86. Medical Women's International Association – MWIA
87. Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples / Movement Against Racism & for Friendship between Peoples – MRAP
88. Mouvement International pour l'Union Fraternelle entre les Races et les Peuples / International Movement for Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples – UFER
89. Muslim World League
90. National Council of German Women's Organisations
91. Organisation pour la Communication en Afrique et de Promotion de la Coopération Economique Internationale – OCAPROCE International
92. Pan Pacific & South-East Asia Women's Association International
93. Pax Christi International
94. Pax Romana
95. Public Services International
96. Radda Barnen – Save the Children Sweden
97. Rwanda Women's Network
98. Salvation Army
99. Socialist International Women
100. Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues – SPSSI
101. Soka Gakkai International – SGI
102. Solar Cookers International – SCI
103. Solidarité Suisse Guinée
104. Soroptimist International
105. Susila Dharma International Association
106. Terres des Hommes International Federation
107. Union Internationale des Organismes Familiaux / International Union of Family Organizations – UIOF

108. Women's Federation for World Peace International – WFWP Intl.
109. Women's International Democratic Federation – WIDF
110. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom – WILPF
111. Women's International Zionist Organisation – WIZO
112. Women's UN Reports Network – WUNRN
113. Women's World Summit Foundation – WWSF
114. World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Association
115. World Association of World Federalists
116. World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts – WAGGGS
117. World Confederation of Labour – WCL
118. World Confederation of Organisations of the Teaching Profession
119. World Council of Churches – WCC
120. World Federation of Democratic Youth – WFDY
121. World Federation of Mental Health – WFMH
122. World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (formerly World Federation of Methodist Women) – WFMUCW
123. World Federation of Trade Unions – WFTU
124. World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organisations – WFUWO
125. World Federation of United Nations Associations – WFUNA
126. World Future Council – WFC
127. World Jewish Congress
128. World Muslim Congress
129. World Organisation Against Torture / Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture – OMTC
130. World Peace Council – WPC
131. World Student Christian Federation – WSCF
132. World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations – WUCWO
133. World University Service – WUS
134. World Veterans Federation – WVF
135. World Vision International – WVI
136. World Young Women's Christian Association – World YWCA
137. ZONTA International

APPENDIX 5

LIST OF STATEMENTS AND MAIN PUBLICATIONS PRODUCED BY THE NGO CSW GENEVA

List of Joint Statements delivered by Committee members
(non exhaustive)

1986	UN Commission on the Status of Women, The Economic Contribution of Unpaid Work
1987	CSW, Women in the UN
1988	CSW Violence in the Family
1989-03	CSW Equality: Economic and Social Participation
1994-01	ILO Technical Meeting on Voluntary initiatives affecting training in the chemical industries
1996-04	UN Economic Commission for Europe
1996-05	Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights on BPFA
1996-06	ILO 83rd Session
1997-06	ILO Need for disaggregated data
1997-10	ILO Experts Meeting on Labour Statistics
1997-12	ILO Meeting on Breaking through the glass ceiling: women in management
1998-06	ILO/ILC 86th Session
1998-12	ILO Human Resource Development in the Public Service
1998	CHR54 Women's Rights
1999-04	CHR55 The Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective VAW
1999-04	CHR55 Rights of the Child
1999-07	ECOSOC Economic and Environmental questions: Women in Development
1999-07	ECOSOC Role of Employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment of women
1999-10	ILO
1999-10	NGO Forum Seoul, Korea. Active Ageing and Care Giving
1999-11	ILO Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development
2000-04	CHR56 The Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective
2000-05	ILO 88th Session Maternity Protection at Work
2000-06	ILO Annual Conference. Panel on Maternity Protection Organised
2000-09	UN Open-Ended working group on the right to development
2000-09	ILO Moving to Sustainable Agricultural Development
2000-10	ILO meeting on Labour Practices in the Footwear, Leather, Textiles and Clothing Industries
2000	ILO Joint Meeting on Lifelong Learning in the 21 st Century
2000-08	Sub-Commission on Protection on HR 52 nd Session Harmful Traditional Practices
2000-08	Sub-Commission on Protection on HR 52 nd Session, Violence Against Women
2000-08	Sub-Commission on Protection on HR 52 nd Session, Implementation of Human Rights with Regard to Women
2000-08	Sub-Commission on Protection on HR 52 nd Session, The Girl Child

- 2001-01 CHR, WG on the Right to Development
- 2001-03 CHR57 Organisation of the Work of the Commission
- 2001-03 CHR57 Tolerance and Respect
- 2001-04 CHR58 Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective
- 2001-05 Video Statement, UNCTAD, Least Developed Countries 3, Brussels
- 2001-05 Statement on behalf of Women's Caucus World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination
- 2001-05 Gender, Globalisation and Right of Women to Development (pre UNCTAD Expert Workshop)
- 2001-06 ILO 89th session of International Labour Conference
- 2001-08 Sub-Commission on Protection on HR
- 2001-10 UNCTAD Expert Meeting on Promoting Competitiveness of SMEs
- 2001-10 Perspectives for a Gender-Equal Learning Community, Barcelona 2001
- 2001-11 World Managers Forum, Marma Group Foundation, Istanbul
- 2001 ECOSOC Implementation and Follow up of UN Conferences
- 2001-10 Networking through Women's NGOs, First UNECE Forum of Women Entrepreneurs
- 2001-11 UNCTAD Expert Meeting, Mainstreaming Gender in order to promote opportunities
- 2002-01 International Seminar on Telework and Women, UNECE and others, Poland
- 2002-01 UN CSW Women's Rights
- 2002-03 CHR Right to Development
- 2002-06 90th Session of the ILO's ILC
- 2002-07 WSIS Preparatory Committee Meeting
- 2002-08 Sub-Commission on the protection of Human Rights : Women's Human Rights
- 2002-08 CHR Women's Human Rights
- 2002-08 World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, Women's Caucus
- 2002-08 Sub-Commission on the Protection of Human Rights, Women Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- 2002-09 One day informal Meeting of CHR, Geneva
- 2003-02 WG Right to development
- 2003-03 CHR59 Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- 2003-03 CHR59 Right to Development
- 2003-03 CSW47 ICT and WSIS
- 2003-04 CHR59 Women's ESC Rights
- 2003-06 Conference on Europe Univ of Wisconsin Alumni Association, Transatlantic relations, Peace
- 2003-07 WSIS gender-caucus
- 2003-10 75th Anniversary Celebration of the Philippine Association of University Women
- 2003-07 WSSD GHS chemical labelling
- 2004-03 CSW48 The Role of Men and Boys
- 2005-03 CHR61 ESC Rights
- 2005-03 CHR61 Rights to Development
- 2005-04 CHR61 Tech Advisory Services
- 2005-04 CHR61 functioning HR mechanism

2005-08	Sub-Commission on Protection on HR 57 th session: Right to development
2005-08	Sub-Commission on Protection on HR 57 th session: Women's Human Rights
2005-08	SubSub-Commission on Protection on HR 57 th session: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
2005-11	WSIS Tunis, ICTs: Women's Vision of a Culture of Peace in the 21 st Century
2006-08	Sub-Commission on Protection on HR 58 th session: Women and Human Rights
2006-09	HRC2 Women Rights
2006-10	HRC2 Mandates of Special Procedures
2006-10	HRC2 UPR
2006-12	HRC3 Expert Advisory body
2007-03	CSW52 gender approach right to peace
2007-06	ILO's 96th International Labour Conference
2007-06	UNECE Conference of European Statisticians, Unpaid work
2007-06	HRC Gender Mainstreaming
2007-06	UNECE CES Unpaid work
2007-09	Panel gender perspective in work of the HRC
2007-09	HRC6 Human Rights Education & Learning
2007-10	HRC-Special-5 Myanmar
2007-12	CoNGO roundtable gender equality & gender justice
2008-03	HRC Gender Equality and Economic Reform
2008-03	HRC7 Children are our future generation
2008-06	HRC8 Violence against Women
2008-06	ILC97
2008-09	Freedom of Expression and Interreligious Dialogue
2008-09	HRC9 Vienna Declaration
2008-09	HRC9 Panel Women's Rights
2008-11	CSW53 Sharing family responsibilities
2009-03	HRC10 Economic Crisis
2009-03	CSW53
2009-04	Durban Review
2009-09	HRC12 Gender Perspective Integration
2010-02	CSW54 traditional practices
2010-03	HRC13 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
2010-03	International Women's Day, UN "Watershed for Women's Human Rights and Empowerment"
2010-03	HRC13 Traditional Values
2011-03	HRC16 Afghan Women and Girls
2013-11	CSW58
2013-12	UN Forum on Business and Human Rights
Undated	ILO Healthcare reform from a Gender Perspective
Undated	Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Human Rights

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2. Working With Refugee Women: A Practical Guide; NGO CSW Geneva WG on Refugees and Migration, 1989
3. The Right to Peace, Report of the 1998 International Women's Day Seminar, NGO CSW Geneva WG on Women and Peace, March 1998
4. Report on the Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 2000 Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, 19-21 January 2000 – E/ECE/RW.2/2000/7 (includes the NGO Forum Report 17-18 January 2000 in Annex II); available on <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/documents/beijing-5/e.ece.rw.2.2000.7.e.pdf>
5. NGO CSW Geneva Report on the Women's Human Rights Caucus during the 56th Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights; Renate Bloem NGO CSW President, May 2000
6. NGO CSW Geneva Annual Report 2001, Renate Bloem
7. Towards Full Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action – NGO CSW Geneva 30th Anniversary Celebration. NGO Forum, Palais des Nations, Geneva, 21-22 July 2003
8. Glossary of Violence Against Women to share understanding of terminology, NGO CSW Geneva Working Group on Violence Against Women, 2004
9. NGO Committee on the Status of Women 2001-2004. Report of the Geneva Committee on the Status of Women 2004, Conchita Poncini, August 2004
10. Water, Cultural Diversity and International Solidarity, Symposium Proceedings edited by Corinne Wacker, 2004 (CD also available)
11. Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 10-year Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action – Report of the NGO Forum 12-13 December 2004 – ECE/AC.28/2004/3/Add.1; available on http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/documents/beijing-10/Final_Report_Add1_EN.pdf
12. Geneva Advocacy Notes produced jointly by NGO CSW Geneva WG on Women in the UNECE, 2006
13. The impact of harmful traditional practices on the girl child, EGM/DVGC/2006/EP.4, Berhane Ras-Work, 2006; Available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/elim-disc-viol-girlchild/ExpertPapers/EP.4%20%20%20Raswork.pdf>
14. A Girl's Right to Live, Female Foeticide and Girl Infanticide, Working Group on the Girl Child, 2007
15. Le Droit de Vivre des Filles, Foeticide Feminin et Infanticide de Filles, Comité ONG de la Femme Genève / Groupe de Travail sur la Petite Fille, 2007
16. Envisioning the Status of Women in 2020: President's Report December 2004 – June 2008; Dr Krishna Ahoojapatel, President NGO CSW Geneva, June 2008
17. Gender Equality and Development: Transitions in the UN; NGO CSW Geneva, Dr Krishna Ahoojapatel and others, 2008
18. NGO Forum UNECE Beijing+15 Regional Review meeting – The Challenges of Gender Equality in the Context of the economic and financial crisis, NGO Forum Report, October 2009
19. NGO CSW Geneva Advocacy Briefs: Issue 1 – Sexual Violence; Issue 2 – Female Genital Mutilation, with others planned on Domestic Violence, Crimes in the name of "Honour", Violence in the Workplace, Elder abuse, Child, early and forced marriage, Trafficking of Women, Harmful Traditional Practices, Psychological Violence; 2013-2014

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 - b. Minutes of Meetings of NGO CSW Geneva (incomplete)
 - c. Working Group Reports (incomplete)
 - d. Files on BANGWE project
 - e. World Conference on Women Planning Committees files 1985 and 1995
 - f. Statements made by NGO CSW Geneva member organisations
 - g. Geneva Advocacy Notes
2. NGO CSW Geneva archives at the UN Library (as part of CoNGO archives)
3. UN Report on the First World Conference for Women
4. From Mexico City to Nairobi: the United Nations decade for women 1975-1985 by Marianne Haslegrave, October 1984
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10. UNECE www.unece.org
11. UNECE / Beijing Platform for Action <http://www.unece.org/gender/welcome-new/monitoring-progress/beijing-platform-for-action.html>
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The report also draws from information obtained in interviews with past and present members of the NGO CSW Geneva (see Acknowledgements at the beginning of the report)

