

On September 21, 2023, the International Day of Peace, the NGO Committee on the Status of Women celebrated its 50th Anniversary. Representatives of member organizations and distinguished guests gathered in Palais Anna and Jean-Gabriel Eynard, Geneva.

Over these five decades, the NGO Committee on the Status of Women Geneva has been a beacon of hope, a powerhouse of advocacy, and a catalyst for change.

Welcome

Julia Handschin performed Whitney Houston's "One Moment in Time" and set the audience in the mood for the 50th anniversary of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women Geneva's Celebration Day.

Dr. Sibylle von Heydebrand (International Alliance of Women), Chair of the Anniversary Task Force, and Carolyn Handschin (Women's Federation for World Peace), president of NGO CSW Geneva, welcomed the guests and emphasized that for 50 years the Committee is advocating for women's and girl's rights, convinced that gender equality is a basic precondition for peace and fairness in the world.

Congratulatory Messages

The Mayor of Geneva, Mr. Alfonso Gomez, and the former Director of the International Labor Organization's Gender Equality Bureau, Ms. Jane Hodges, expressed their appreciation for the commitment of the committee.

Written congratulations were submitted by Tatiana Valovaya, Director of the United Nations Office Geneva, Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Secretary-General, International Telecommunication Union ITU, Tatiana Molcean, UNECE Executive Secretary, as well as by Dr. Maria Niera WHO Director of Department on Environment, Climate and Health.

Thanks to the Member Organizations

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women could not fulfill its commitment to the United Nations to raise awareness on issues related to the status of women and gender equality without the strong commitment of its member organizations, all accredited to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The representatives of the 28 member organizations were welcomed and thanked for their tireless cooperation and valuable support.

Past, Present and Future of the Committee

The main program focused on the past, present and future of the committee:

Interviews with eyewitnesses of the early years provided an insight into the history. The following pioneers shared their involvement in the past: Afton Beutler-Reed (Mother's Legacy Project), Berhane Ras-Work (United for Equity and Ending Racism), Brigitte Polonovski (International Council of Women), Edith Ballantyne (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) and Paula Daepfen (FAWCO and Biovision).

A panel discussion explored the Committee's advocacy work, its presence today, and the collaboration of civil society and governments within the United Nations. With contributions from: Ms. Adriana Quinones, Head of Human Rights and Development of UN Women Geneva, Ms. Corinne Dettmeijer-Vermeulen, member of CEDAW, Prof. Manjit Dosanjh (International Cancer Expert Corps), Zarin Hainsworth (Widows Rights International) and Srruthi Lekha (Women's Federation for World Peace).

Video statements provided information about the plans of NGO CSW Geneva's member organization for the advancement of human rights and the empowerment of women and girls.

The event was followed by an official reception generously supported by the City and the Canton of Geneva, represented by Mayor Alfonso Gomez and Beatrice Ferrari, Director of International Affairs of the Canton of Geneva.

Arlesheim (Switzerland), September 26, 2023

Dr. Sibylle von Heydebrand (International Alliance of Women), Chair of the 50th Anniversary Task Force