



WFWPI OFFICES FOR UN RELATIONS NEWSLETTER



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WFWPI Celebrating 30 Years

by Carolyn Handschin

The Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) celebrated its 30th anniversary on April 10, 2022. It was a time of reflection on the past, and projection into the future. Mme. Liri Berisha, First Lady of Albania (1992-1997), was one of many to send congratulatory greetings. She said, "Today WFWP is at its most beautiful and most creative age. Today this 30-year-old has many reasons to be proud... proud of the great family that she has created of sisters and brothers spread around the world and above all proud of her noble mission, which today is being embraced and respected..."

Many remember the visionary words spoken to a crowd of tens of thousands at the Seoul Stadium inaugural event 30 years ago by its Co-founder, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, "Our movement is not for women alone."



Vision

Women working together to realize one global family rooted in a culture of sustainable peace.

Mission

Empowering women as peacebuilders and leaders in the family to transform the community, nation and world.

Through education, advocacy, partnership, reconciliation and humanitarian service, WFWPI aims to create an environment of peace and well-being for future generations and people of all races, cultures and religious creeds.

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WFWPI Celebrating 30 Years (Cont'd)

It is a movement of love for our husbands, children and must bear fruit in strong, loving families, with these becoming the seeds to form peaceful culture, caring communities and nations. Eventually, for the sake of peace, women must take the lead in government, culture, finance and society.”

WFWP has dramatically expanded since its first programs when almost 1500 members of WFWP Japan went “on mission” to nearly 150 nations in 1994 to empower local women and engage in community building. The current intricate network of programs in almost as many countries supports nearly every Sustainable Development Goal. The wealth of local knowledge acquired over these years, and successes in addressing the same core issues being debated at the United Nations, have given WFWP the opportunity to engage in consultative relations in the main UN Offices, advocating for the engagement of women in decision-making, problem-solving and prevention at all levels at the Commission on the Status of Women, the Human Rights Council, the Crime Commission, and other intergovernmental and civil society institutions.

At a very special event marking the 30 years and appreciating the early pioneers, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon again addressed a large international audience. She spoke, as she often does, about history, reminding the audience that although the status of women was not always visible, including in medieval Christian Europe, when nations faced a crisis, it was the women who stood at the forefront. History will be re-written.

She went on to say that humanitarian work is very important, but proper education is critical. It is women and mothers who usually create nurturing environments, and pass on the traditions, culture and norms that will facilitate peace cultures and human responsibility. The work of women leaders in the complexities of today’s social environment, must help all people, especially youth, be secure in knowing how important their talents, skills, knowledge and goodwill is to a future of sustainable peace.

CSW 66

The 66th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women: Opening Session

*by Salomé Abittan-Tenenbaum
and Mako Mori*



Photo Credit: UN Women/Ryan Brown

The 66th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) took place from March 14 to 25, 2022 in hybrid form (online and in-person). The CSW is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The theme of this year's commission was "Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, disaster risk reduction policies and programs."

On March 14, at the Opening Session CSW66, the United Nations reinforced its commitment to gender-responsive approaches to addressing

climate issues. It was a powerful moment to celebrate the newly achieved parity within the UN, but also to remember that the fight has only just begun.

This women's representation was felt in the quality of the speakers and delegates present that day, starting with Ambassador Mathu Joyini, Permanent Representative of South Africa and Chair of the Commission, and H.E. Sima Bahous, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women.

The discourse converged on several points:

Today, the world is experiencing rising temperatures, environmental degradation, and natural disasters, but not everyone is equally vulnerable. The UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated, while reinforcing his commitment to put women's rights at the center of UN policies: "Everywhere, women and girls face the greatest threats and the deepest harm and they are taking action to confront the climate and environmental crises, yet they continue to be largely excluded from the rooms where decisions are taken." This shows us that ensuring a just transition to a green, sustainable future also requires that the UN puts women at the heart of decision-making.

The speakers also recalled the special attention that must be given to indigenous women, women in rural situations and refugee women. Youth representative and co-leader of the Generation Equality Action Coalition for Feminist Action for Climate Justice, Joanita Babirye, spoke from experience, as families and farmers in her hometown of Jinja, Uganda have been displaced due to severe climate. Her voice represented the youth, civil society and especially the marginalized communities that depend on endangered natural spaces.

Many also recall that the COVID-19 pandemic may have reinforced this situation of inequality. Others, like the French delegate on behalf of Europe, Elisabeth Moreno, assure their support to women victims of the war, especially in Ukraine at the moment.



A general consensus among the Committee was the known fact that women are at the heart of the fight for the environment, as their nature is to nurture and uplift their families and communities. In the general discussion, Valentin Rybakov (Belarus), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Family, reminded us that the decision we make now, is what the future generation will learn from. He says "Family members instill in their children respect and caring attitude towards nature and form their responsible environmental behaviour from an early age."

Abdulla Shahid (Maldives), President of the General Assembly also validated the strength of women's voices, saying that women are "still a largely untapped resource." WFPW also believes in the power of women and works to uplift women's voices, whether that is through webinars or hosting workshops to allow a platform for them to share their best practices. Women's strength lies in their ability to think beyond the individual, and make decisions on what's best for the whole.

All members of the committee came to general agreement that this is a collaborative, multi-stakeholder effort to put women at the heart of leadership, empowering them through education and economic assistance. The Opening Session ends on a hopeful note, ready to take action and make effective decisions.

Global Solidarity for a Healthy and Sustainable Environment CSW 66 Consultation Day: NGO CSW Geneva / Vienna

By Carolyn Handschin

An encouraging written message from the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mme. Michele Bachelet, was a welcome opening to the CSW66 Consultation Day jointly prepared by the NGO Committees on the Status of Women in Geneva and Vienna. WFWPI has been active in the NGO Committees in Geneva and Vienna over many years, working on distinct issues related to the different agencies based in each UN venue. The Consultation Day collaboration provided an enjoyable opportunity to complement each other's expertise. In addition to launching the two weeks of CSW66, the event was an opportunity to highlight the new Human Rights Council Resolution 43/13 recognizing a Human Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment and the UN Office on Drugs and Crimes Resolution 10/6, also new, on Preventing and Combatting Crimes that Affect the Environment.

The NGO CSW Geneva President and Director for the WFWPI Offices for UN Relations, Mrs. Carolyn Handschin, gave opening remarks on the opportunities provided by the 2022 theme, and reflections on the Call to Action for civil society engagement that was the core of the day's event. She introduced a video message from the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to the Environment, Dr. David Boyd. Expressing great appreciation for the dedication of civil society to the issues over decades, he spoke of the significance of the new resolution as a catalyst for even more effective partnership for stewardship of the environment.

A rich and stimulating panel followed on the theme

“Empowering Rural Women in the Context of Climate Change.” The panel brought together Dr. Christine Altenbuchner of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences and Ms. Mag Theresia Weiser of the Federal Institute of Agricultural Economics, Rural and Mountain Research (Austria) for an academic and interactive look into the theme. Ms. Barbara Kunz brought in a different, and very experience-based perspective as President of the Bernese (Swiss) Federation of Rural Women Associations. Carol McConkie, Geneva Vice President (LDS Charities) graciously facilitated.

Interlaced between elements of the program were smart, dynamic video clips, including one from the UN, “Women leading Climate Change Solutions,” calling for gender responsive action to the climate crisis in areas of physical health, livelihoods, food insecurity and gender-based violence. The final section of the program was the Declaration, Call to Action and Advocacy Resources that was introduced by young committee members from Geneva and Vienna, led by Ms. Srruthi Lekha (WFWPI), the Geneva Youth Task Force facilitator. The documents had been drafted and prepared by a small team from the Vienna and Geneva Committees, including, Ms. Laurie Richardson (FAWCO), Ms. Evelyn Durmayer (IBPW), Ms. Zarin Hainsworth (NAWO), Srruthi and Carolyn, hoping to catch the women and youth participating in CSW66 with the intention of creating local programs and networks for the protection of nature (<https://www.change.org/p/governments-global-partnerships-for-the-human-right-to-a-clean-healthy-and-sustainable-environment>).

14-25 MARCH 2022
 **CSW66**
 COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

CLIMATE CHANGE • ENVIRONMENT
DISASTER RISK REDUCTION
GENDER EQUALITY AT THE CENTRE OF SOLUTIONS

A Holistic Approach to the Climate Crisis

By Mako Mori



WFWPI believes women and the environment have often been closely linked, based on similarities in their nature to nurture. To address solutions with a holistic approach to the climate crisis, we've invited women from various fields to speak and designed workshops led by women for our 3-day session, the "Spring Awakening" from March 9 to 11, 2022. The WFWPI Office for UN Relations in New York hosted the "Spring Awakening" which addressed the UN Sustainable Development Goals 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, 13: Climate Action, and 17: Partnerships for the Goals through the six sessions. These sessions aimed to help pace changemakers on the journey to healing the Earth & empowering women, through incorporating sustainable practices in our own lives.

Day 1 was centered around the theme: Food for the Soul. In the morning, we had a presentation on "Permaculture: Path to Health & Planetary Healing" by Yani Amores Dutta & Raoul Amores, Founders of the Regenes Project, which is the first and only Ecosystem Restoration Camp in the Philippines, with the mission of "Healing Nature through People, and Healing People through Nature. In this refreshing talk, Yani shared the importance of learning from nature. Nature serves the greater purpose and she says, "If we go about our day thinking of others, about the greater whole, we are on the right path."

What better way to reconnect to the Earth, than cooking a meal that tastes like home, using earth-based ingredients from the soil? In the afternoon, a

healthy cooking class, hosted by the mother and daughter duo, Burgi Ennis & Arehta Fortune was offered. They prepared a hearty quinoa salad, while also sharing a bonus recipe for a chocolate quinoa drink.

Day 2 was centered around the theme: Bridging Divides. The day began with an interactive dialogue on "Peace and Reconciliation through Climate Action-Case Study on North and South Korea," by Dr. Anna Grichting. In this conversation, Dr. Grichting explored the idea of co-creating ecological landscapes for peace, justice and reconciliation at the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) to foster healing and bridge divides. She also spoke on the Women's DMZ Peace Zone Project, which aims to co-design a space for women, peace and the environment in the Korean DMZ.





In the afternoon, Ms. Yun-A Johnson, sustainable designer and the Founder of Your Aesthetic Style Creators Collaborative hosted a workshop on a “Guide to Sustainable Fashion.” In this eye-opening session, Yun-A challenged the participants to dig deeper in understanding what we truly want when we get the urge to buy something new. In this helpful guide, participants learned more about how to trust your personal style over “must haves” and trends, which is a sustainable approach to fashion.

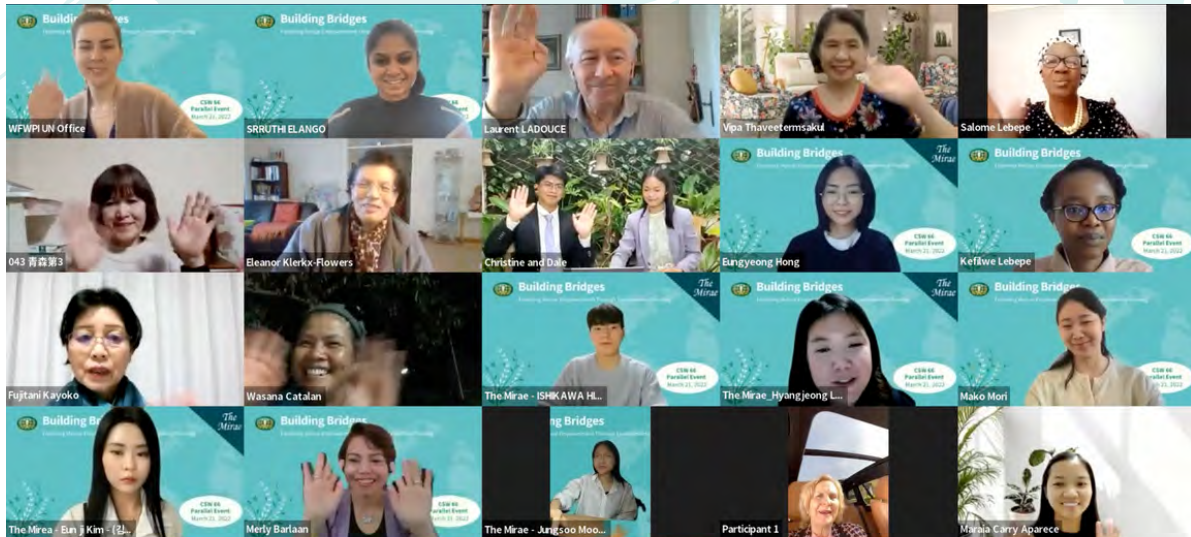
Day 3 was centered around the theme: Action for Sustainability. In the morning, the participants were invited to an Inner Peace Yoga Class with Dr. Kitmaura. The healing and meditative yoga flow really helped the participants to get in touch with their mind-body awareness and become more grounded in their breath.

The Spring Awakening culminated with a special fundraising program and celebration, featuring testimonies from Giving for Good International Climate Action projects, a presentation from our Director, Merly Barlaan, entertainment and the anticipated Art Book reveal. It is our great hope that our changemakers and peacemakers take this holistic approach to solving the climate crisis, and incorporate it into their lives and communities to heal the planet Earth, in partnership with the UN SDG initiatives.



Building Bridges: Fostering Mutual Empowerment Through Environmental Healing

By *Salomé Abittan-Tenenbaum & Mako Mori*



During the 66th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66), the Virtual Parallel Event, “Building Bridges: Fostering Mutual Empowerment Through Environmental Healing” was held on March 21, 2022. The CSW66 Parallel Event was organized by WFWPI, in collaboration with WFWP Korea.

The world knows that we need to work together, yet we find it difficult to overcome fundamental differences in worldviews and values. Through storytelling and interactive dialogue, WFWPI and WFWP Korea aimed to create a space that encouraged the exploration of how we as women and girls can be empowered by leading the way in transcending obstacles of self-interest and fostering relationships of trust for the sake of a mutual goal of environmental healing in our communities. The climate crisis is increasingly affecting all communities around the world and WFWPI envisioned using this space as an opportunity to build bridges between the government and civil society, men and women, as well as between people and nature.

Ms. Srruthi Lehka, the UN Representative at the

WFWPI Office for UN Relations in Geneva, was the moderator of the program and welcomed Mrs. Merly Barlaan, Deputy Director of the WFWPI Offices for UN Relations, for the Opening Remarks. She described how some of the GFGI projects bridged divides, such as in Ghana, where “WFWP volunteers built partnerships with local NGOs and schools, to show students what sustainable practice looks like by creating art from waste.” In a hope-filled message Mrs. Barlaan said it is through these efforts that we can “see that there are initiatives around the world which are creating a wave of women-empowering climate adaptation initiatives, building bridges of trust and collaboration for the sake of healing the earth.”

Next, Ms. Hyang Jeong Lee, Member of the Mirae, WFWP Korea, introduced the youth think tank Mirae. She explained the meaning behind the word Mirae which means “Future” in Korean. Ms. Lee shared that Mirae is a place for young people to take on the vision of the future because “we believe that when we take the initiative to solve problems with a sense of ownership more than anyone else, we can bring the winds of change.”

The first featured youth speaker invited to speak was Ms. Kefilwe Lebepe, Coordinator of the GFGI Cloth Nappy Climate Action Project. Ms. Lebepe emphasized the importance of research, transparency, and partnerships in building out the Cloth Nappy project. Her project beautifully exemplified what it meant to raise empowering women leaders sustainably, by listening to the people, gaining trust from the people and having the village take ownership. Through each of these efforts, “at the official end of the project, we were able to hand over the project to Queen Dikgale and her people.” This ensured the project was truly benefitting the community and could be run independently.

Our second set of speakers were Ms. Christine Bulayo and Mr. Dale Dejecacion, Co-Project Managers of the WFPW Permaculture Literacy Program in the Philippines. Although permaculture is generally seen as an agricultural practice, Ms. Bulayo and Mr. Dejecacion explained that it is more than that, it is “a way of thinking- knowing nature, being one with nature, and working with nature, not against nature.” This eye-opening presentation taught the audience how permaculture can be practiced even if you don’t have a garden. Ms. Bulayo explains this saying “you can integrate the design and movement of the wind, the existing water formation, the land formation, and the plants according to the existing movement of these elements.” As long as you follow this system you can create your own permaculture garden! This presentation invigorated the audience with hope as with the Permaculture mindset in place, “every child, all men, and women, will enjoy the human and universal right to a clean and healthy environment.”

The audience were given opportunities to engage through the conversations which took place in between each part of the program and had time to ask questions directly to the speakers.

In conclusion Mrs. Carolyn Handschin, Director of the WFWPI Offices for UN Relations, expressed her gratitude to the UN for choosing a theme on the environment which “easily unites us, something that [we] can find partnership in easily: between households, within communities” and “something that propagates the sense that my success is yours.”

So let's join hands and heal this planet together!



Peace and Reconciliation at the Korean DMZ

By Srruthi Lekha Raaja Elango

On March 17, Women's UN Report Network and WFWPI organized a virtual CSW66 parallel event on "Peace and Reconciliation at the Korean DMZ." In the spirit of UN SC Resolution 1325, this event successfully managed to engage actors and stakeholders in envisioning a new future in and across the Demilitarized Zone of Korea through the creation of a physical and virtual space to bring together women and youth working towards peace and shared prosperity in Korea and worldwide. The ultimate goal of these discussions were to go beyond the political, physical and mental barriers to reconciliation and development through envisioning a landscape for Korean women from North and South to meet, as well as an international hub for women, peace and the environment, building on events of this theme presented at the UN Human Rights Council and at CSW66.

The event began with a warm welcome from Mrs. Carolyn Handschin, the Director of WFWPI Offices for UN Relations. She invited then Dr. Anna Grichting from the University of Vermont to address the gathering as the keynote speaker. Through her experience as an urbanist, Dr. Grichting presented on the need of building peace zones at national borders and their characteristics. From the example of the Berlin Wall to her success stories in Cyprus, it was very inspiring to learn from such models and aim for a similar one at the DMZ. Following her, Dr. Sung-Hwan Son, President, World Wildlife Fund (WWF)



Korea and former Ambassador to Sweden presented remarks via video message, where he strongly insisted on the need for coexistence of all species and people, creating a sustainable space in even very conflicting regions.

Mrs. Handschin then welcomed Dr. Colette Mazzucelli, Graduate Faculty, New York University, to lead a round table discussion with Ms. Lois A Herman, Managing Director, Women's UN Report Network; Mrs. Carolyn Handschin, Director, Offices for UN Relations, Women's Federation for World Peace International; and Korean and other international youth representatives.

This discussion covered topics beginning from the need for such a creative space in the DMZ to the nature of the DMZ and its compatibility related to such an initiative. Adding to these important aspects of the goal, some action-oriented topics were also discussed, such as how to mobilize the governments to commit more such causes and initiatives. Beyond that, the panel also took the chance to explore the emotions and attitude of the Korean population and why there is a substantive lack of interest in Korean unification, especially among the Korean youth.

After a very constructive discussion, the panelists concluded by presenting ways for constructive action and solutions to the hurdles which might arise through the due course of such initiatives.



Observation of the Sixty-Sixth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66)

By Lydia Wood, HR Intern, UN Office Geneva

The priority theme of this year's Commission on the Status of Women, was "gender equality in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes." On March 21, a virtual parallel event was held by the Modern Women's Foundation (MWF), an organization based in Taiwan, on the "Integrated Practice of Anti-Violence Against Women: From Services to Policy Advocacy." This conference was moderated by Professor Lillian Lih Rong Wang and she began by introducing the various themes that would be covered by the speakers such as: integrated practices of domestic violence, the effect of the pandemic, and the new role of NGO's. Following this, opening remarks were given by President Pan. She expressed how the Foundation has worked to promote the passage of vital laws and has sought to prevent sexual violence, control and harassment. Finally, she emphasized how the event would discuss how these approaches have been affected by the pandemic.

The first speaker of this session was Ms. Yu-Uei He, Director of the Domestic Violence Intervention Unit, MWF, who explored the "Models of Economic Empowerment for Victims of Domestic Violence." She began by explaining the various forms of economic abuse and the effects they can have, which I found particularly interesting. Her work made it evident to me that the Modern Women's Foundation is working hard to empower women and educate them so they can leave these situations of economic abuse, whilst continually developing new strategies and programs to continue to assist future victims. The next speaker was Ms. Pei-Ling Wang, a member of the Emergency and Intensive Care Committee of Taiwan Nurses Association and Vice Director of Nursing Service, Taipei Medical Nursing Hospital, who explored "Injury Examination, Medical treatment and case service of domestic violence & sexual assault during the epidemic." What I found interesting from her presentation was the data she outlined on how the pandemic has affected the number of domestic abuse cases and how COVID-19

has affected hospitals. It was interesting to see the five principles that should be put in place to help these victims: protection, privacy, patience, multi-professionals, and post-care. The following speaker was Ms. Chia-Chiao Lin, Social Worker, Sexual Violence Intervention Unit, MWF, who explored a similar topic which was "The effects of the pandemic on domestic violence and sexual assault victim's medical treatment, inspection, and case service." Within her presentation she explored the various challenges Covid-19 has had on the case system and in the end provided a suggestion on how to prevent these challenges such as by developing a full-fledged support channel. I found it shocking when she presented the data that in Taiwan domestic violence has increased by 15% during the pandemic, but important services like the one-stop service have ended. The fourth speaker was Ms. Miao-Ju Chang, Social Work Supervisor, Sexual Violence Intervention Unit, MWF, who explored "Flipped Concept: Affirmative consent – only yes means yes." Within her presentation she discussed the three laws, with a passage prompted by the Foundation, to eliminate gender-based violence. The next part of her presentation explored the process of the "only yes means yes" campaign with the eventual ruling by the Supreme Court in 2021, which is a movement that was evidently extremely important. The final speaker of the session was Ms. Chiou-Lan Wang, Researcher, MWF, who explored "The legislative process of Anti-Gender Violence in Taiwan: The Stalking and Harassment Prevention Act." I was shocked when she presented the data on the victims of stalking in Taiwan and how much of it is done online. She also showed important work on stalking prevention and the drafting and passing of anti-stalking legislation in 2021.

Overall, from this event, I observed that MWF is working in various key areas to reduce violence against women and is striving to beat the challenges that have been created by COVID-19.

Observation of the 5th Plenary meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, Sixty-Sixth Session (CSW66)

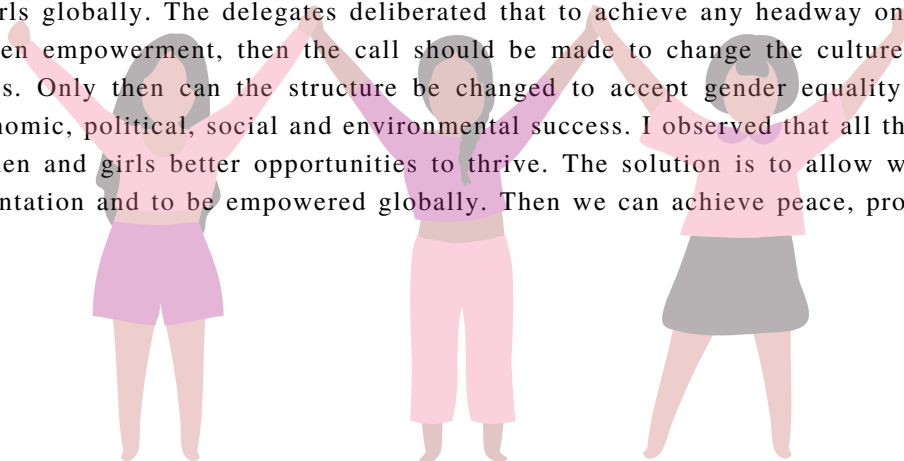
By Adebowale Meroyi, HR Intern, UN Office Geneva

The discussions at the sixty-sixth session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) were centered on the priority theme, “Achieving Gender equality and the Empowerment of all Women and girls in the context of Climate change, environmental and Disaster risk reduction Policies and Programmes.” The CSW is multifaceted, and discussions take place on many levels. Plenary sessions are meetings during which representatives of member states make statements and discuss the priority theme and work toward drafting agreed conclusions. The 5th plenary session was held on March 16, which I was privileged to observed virtually.

Delegates from member states all came with their diverse positions on the issue of gender equality and women empowerment in the face of climate change. Much emphasis was centered on the need for restructuring policies to allow for more inclusion of women in leadership and political seats. Their central focus was the need to keep advocating for the liberation of women and girls and the need for the fundamental human rights of women to be clearly accepted, fully implemented and followed up by governments. This is necessary to avert the continued discrimination against women worldwide. The representatives sought policies that would allow more women to gain access to funds, a right to education and equal rights to decent work without discrimination. The need to remove every barrier and glass ceiling against women in all facets of life, including the right to their body, was advocated for. The delegates condemned rape, the stigmatization of women, and victimization and intimidation of women by men. Other delegates significantly condemned the killing of women in Ukraine as well as the devastating consequence of war on women’s life and psychology in all conflict-affected nations.

Delegates pointed out clearly that the diverse nature of the current global pandemic has had a devastating health problem that has worsened climate change. Women and children are most affected by the crisis and they were among the largest percentage that couldn’t cope with the negative outcome of the pandemic and war on their environment, life and body. Emphasis was placed on the crucial need to increase the participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels of government. The representative for Albania cited the example of its country, where women are currently given 70% of ministerial seats. It was asserted that gender inequality and climate change are intertwined, and they are the main challenges to attaining sustainable development. Therefore, gender equality and sustainable development is achievable if women are empowered to showcase their potential and contribute fairly to the development of their nations.

Though delegates from the different member states highlighted some of the steps their governments have taken towards creating enabling environments to achieve gender equality, the gender gap is still very wide due to high levels of gender inequality and complexities across the board. The delegates sought for protection of women, girls and the disabled. The delegates advocated for the right to live a life of independence with safety for women and girls globally. The delegates deliberated that to achieve any headway on the issue of gender equality and women empowerment, then the call should be made to change the culture of gender bias and gender inequalities. Only then can the structure be changed to accept gender equality as the best way to achieve more economic, political, social and environmental success. I observed that all the deliberations were about giving women and girls better opportunities to thrive. The solution is to allow women to have equal rights and representation and to be empowered globally. Then we can achieve peace, progress and equity for all.



Observations of the 49th Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

By Heather Rainey, HR Intern, UN Office Geneva

February 28 marked the opening of the 49th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council, where I had the privilege of observing several sessions. In the current climate of war, human rights abuses and humanitarian atrocities, it is unsurprising that the UNHRC49 included an urgent debate on the Russia-Ukraine conflict as well as discussion on the status of human rights in Venezuela.

The urgent debate on the Russia-Ukraine conflict took place on the 3rd and 4th of March and opened with statements from the President of the Human Rights Council, H.E. Federico Villegas, as well as addresses from United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, H.E. Michelle Bachelet, and the Chair of the Coordination Committee of UN Special Procedures, H.E. Victor Madrigal-Borloz. All declarations echoed distress regarding Russia's aggression towards Ukraine. The debate included 36 member states, 66 observer states, three international organizations and 29 civil society organizations. Whilst most states chose to condemn Russia's violence, several took a more neutral stance. A common theme that struck me throughout the UNHRC49 is the stark difference in freedom of expression between state representatives and civil society organizations. Understandably, state representatives must abide by strict diplomatic protocols, however, the lack of harsh condemnation of Russia's actions from key states (just under a fifth of member states abstained) was heavily juxtaposed by the more emotive addresses given by civil society organizations. The overwhelming decision to "condemn in the strongest possible terms the human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law resulting from the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine" also served to highlight the intricate relationship between Russia, China and India by drawing attention to their abstention. China's initial decision to vote against the emergency debate was followed by abstention from the final resolution. This is thought to be a sign H.E. Xi Jinping does not want to cut ties with other political leaders who may be allies against the West, whilst India relies heavily on bilateral trade with

Russia and has spoken out this week about its aim to stabilize their economic ties. The recent decision to suspend Russia from the Human Rights Council marked the resumption of the emergency debate and reinforced the global criticism of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Furthermore, I observed the 34th Meeting discussing Human Rights in Venezuela, focusing on the extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, unfair trials and excessive use of force. States including Peru and the Netherlands used their ninety seconds to offer recommendations including reforms of the police and judicial system as well as suggesting the presence of the OHCHR in the state. However, other states including Iran utilized the opportunity to air other ideological and international grievances, notably with the US. Iran declared the US must be held accountable for its atrocious actions, referencing the economic sanctions against Venezuela, arguing this constituted a violation of the human rights of the whole Venezuelan population. It was particularly interesting to observe the subtleties of how states conduct diplomacy in the context of the UNHRC, as the civilized nature of the debate does not reflect the states' external relationship. Areas such as Zimbabwe, who had visits from the Special Rapporteur regarding the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures in 2021, did little to condemn the abuse of human rights in Venezuela. Instead, they used their platform to voice opinions relating to the counterproductivity of country specific initiatives, stating that it undermines sovereignty. Furthermore, it recognized and praised Venezuela's commitment to fulfilling human rights obligations, rather than taking the approach of other states to highlight significant areas for improvement.

Overall, my experience of attending UNHRC49 events has served to further educate me in the intricacies of state diplomacy. The subtle approaches different nations take to condemn some states' actions or solidify ties with others is microcosmic of how the reality unfolds in the global political arena.