

## WFWP USA: Attending the 68th annual Commission on the Status of Women

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Let me share a very beautiful story of dreams that came true. I truly believe that we come into this world with a certain vision given by God, and deep inside, we already know about our mission, destined to complete in this short journey. The very first time I deeply sensed my vision was at the UN Model back in 2014 when I was a young student at the university pursuing my bachelor's degree. I was appointed as a women's rights advocate and stood on the podium arguing against gender violence. Feeling the power to raise an issue and fight for justice, I started dreaming about making a real difference in real life for real people. So, I began taking small steps toward my big dream, even though it seemed unreal at the time. I worked hard on my studies to learn more about global issues and earn the degree that would enable me to join the UN team. Serving the UN was my biggest dream from the very beginning of my career path, as I prioritized being a part of such an international community to deliver help to those in need. Although I did join the UN in my home country, visiting the UN HQ and attending various conferences with global leaders remained unreal for me.



My inner quest for something bigger always made me go beyond. Therefore, I decided to leave my comfort zone, challenge myself, and chase my dream despite all the sacrifices and risks. Following my heart's voice led me to a sacred place called the Women's Federation for World Peace, which made my dreams come true. WFWP granted me a significant opportunity to attend the 68th annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) at the UN HQ in New York from March 11-22. CSW68 brings together governments, civil society organizations, experts, and activists from all over the world to address gender

issues and take necessary actions. I was honored not only to take part in various sessions but also to be engaged in hosting parallel events and trainings during CSW68. I fully immersed myself in my job, and I must confess that I have never been as happy as I was during these past two weeks. Despite working day and night, I never felt overwhelmed or stressed, thanks to the great motivational women leaders in the WFP team who expressed their motherly love and care. During the first week of CSW68, I met brilliant women from different countries, had the pleasure to converse with them, ask questions, and exchange ideas. Our team hosted a two-day advocacy training, parallel event, and a special tour to FDR's home, thanks to which I expanded my network, improved my professional skills, and learned a lot about various projects. Every single day of the first week expanded the horizons of my mind and brought amazing insights. Our tour to FDR's home and Val-Kill Cottage literally blew my mind when I heard powerful stories about Eleanor Roosevelt. I was moved by her life story, where she practiced equality with her staff and chose to be compassionate and kind despite various betrayals by close people. Reading the Universal Declaration of Human Rights initially drafted by her, I posed questions to myself - how can I be an ally for human rights, how can I impact change at home, in my community? These questions became my main motivation to wake up every day and take small steps towards positive changes.



While the first week of CSW68 passed by in the blink of an eye, the second week brought even more surprises to my life that I could have ever imagined. After finalizing all our events, I had the opportunity to attend all the sessions happening at the UN HQ. During that time, I entered the General Assembly Hall for the very first time, and my jaw dropped at the magnificent view I had only seen in pictures or on TV. I couldn't believe my own eyes that I was standing right there in that hall I had dreamed of for so long. I shed some tears and felt immensely grateful for everything. The next day, I attended very interesting sessions about the gender pay gap, surrogacy, trafficking, and women's rights. I was fortunate to sit next to great leaders and speakers, ask my questions, and receive insights. The most memorable part of CSW68 was the celebration of International Day of Nowruz, the new year for Central Asian countries, including my home country, Kazakhstan. It marks the first day of spring and is celebrated on the day of the astronomical vernal equinox, which usually occurs on March 21-22. I met representatives of Kazakhstan at the UN, for which I was very happy. I wore my traditional dress and was honored to represent my culture and share it with people at the UN. I felt empowered when everyone admired my attire, when I took pictures with people from different cultural backgrounds, and felt united with everyone. I cannot express the feelings and happiness I experienced during the past two weeks. It still feels like a dream or fairytale. I am so grateful for all the opportunities WFP provided me and for these unforgettable moments that truly made me happy, empowered, and motivated. CSW68 was a call to action, and I personally felt the power of taking action. After CSW68, I am now ready to act towards bringing positive changes and betterment to the world. Thank you, WFP, for raising such peace-loving future leaders and for sowing the seeds of love in our hearts.