

Report from the CSW59: WFWPI and the UN Commission on the Status of Women

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The Women's Federation for World Peace, International has participated in the annual sessions of the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) for the past thirteen years. The mission of CSW is the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. CSW is under the umbrella of the UN Women. The annual CSW session is jointly organized by UN Women and the NGO CSW NY Committee. This year's session runs from March 9 until March 20, includes more than 450 parallel events and more than 8,500 women and men have registered to participate.

This year, the 59th annual session of CSW, the theme is "Implementing the Beijing Platform for Action." This refers to the Fourth World Conference on Women, which was held in Beijing in 1995. As a young organization of only three years, WFWPI was fortunate to participate in this conference, along with a delegation of several hundred WFWPI leaders and members from around the world. WFWPI's delegation was led by Ms. Maureen Reagan, the daughter of US President Ronald Reagan.

WFWPI's delegation for CSW 59 was led by Prof. Yeon Ah Moon, President of WFWPI, and by Ms. Carolyn Handschin, Director of the WFWPI UN Office, and included close to seventy WFWPI leaders, members, and guests from ten countries. WFWPI leaders included international vice presidents, secretaries general, national chapter presidents, WFWPI UN representatives, interns and staff.

WFWPI participated in CSW 59 on a number of levels, beginning with the NGO CSW New York Consultation Day which was held in the historic Apollo Theater, in Harlem, on Sunday, March 8. One highlight of this event was a heartwarming presentation by the Honorable, respectfully referred to as Mama, Gertrude Mongella, Under-secretary General from 1996 to 1997, and the first president of the Pan-African Parliament. Herself a Tanzanian, she also chaired the Fourth World Conference for Women in 1995. On Sunday afternoon, WFWPI participated in the CSW 59 march organized by NGO CSW NY.

On Monday, March 9, Prof. Yeon Ah Moon, President of WFWPI, International, attended the Opening Session of CSW 59 representing WFWPI. Speakers included Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.

WFWPI held a parallel event, at the Armenian Convention Center, with the theme, "Young Women and Leadership: Education, Opportunities, and Obstacles," from 12:30 – 2 pm, on March 9, which was attended by 270 guests, which included student delegations, from six schools in Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey. It was co-sponsored by Montage Initiative, WFWPI, USA, and the World Youth Alliance.

The parallel event included two panels. The first panel, chaired by Heather Fraser-Harris, Administrator, WFWPI UN Office, included representatives from the four sponsoring organizations, who briefly

introduced their work. WFWPI was introduced by Heather Fraser Harris. Montage Initiative was represented by Sharon Pedrosa and Klevisa Kovaci, both recent graduates of Fairfield University in Connecticut, and members of Montage Initiative's Student Advisory Board. WFWP, USA was introduced by Kiyomi Schmidt, the Administrator for that office. World Youth Alliance Foundation was represented by Weronika Janczuk, Director of Education.



The second panel was chaired by Ms. Nomnandi Bengu, Youth Educator and Chairwoman of WFWP, Harlem. Panelists included Ms. H. A., Founder and Author, Beyond Service book project, and Non profit and Social Innovation Consultant; Ms. Roudabeh Jamshid Eini, MA candidate, in Global Development and Peace, from the University of Bridgeport; Ms. Christelle Ngama, Founder, Congo Rises, and law student from the United Kingdom; and Weronika Janczuk, Director of Education, World Youth Alliance Foundation.

On the following day, WFWPI hosted a luncheon, in the West Terrace Room, Delegates Dining Area, in the UN Headquarters in New York, which was attended by over 100 leaders, members and friends of WFWPI. Chaired by Nicole Thiessen, Paralegal in Bridgeport, Connecticut, the keynote speaker was Ms. Patience W. Stephens, Special Advisor for Education, from UN Women. President Yeon Ah Moon presented the vision of WFWPI's founder, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. This was followed by the guest speaker, Ms. Hazami Barmada, Communications Specialist from the Office of the UN Secretary General's Envoy on Youth. Dr. Padmini Murthy, member of the NGO CSW NY Executive Committee, attended the luncheon.

Ms. Carolyn Handschin, Director of the WFWPI UN Office, gave a presentation entitled "WFWPI and the Beijing Platform for Action." Ms. Tokuko Sato, a Tsugaru Kite artist from Japan, presented gifts of custom made kites to the speakers, high level guests, and WFWPI leaders. Gifts were presented to the speakers, as well as to the parallel event panelists and moderators, by President Yeon Ah Moon, Ms. Carolyn Handschin, and Ms. Alexa Ward, Deputy Director of the WFWPI UN Office.

WFWPI was pleased to be among the participants who attended the Planet 5050 event which was held in the Manhattan Center on Tuesday evening, March 10, and featured UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, the Honorable Hillary Clinton, and the Honorable Bill de Blasio, Mayor of New York City.

The WFWPI delegation attended dozens of side events which are sponsored by governments and UN entities in the UN headquarters, as well as parallel events organized by NGOs which were held in the UN Church Center, Salvation Army, and Armenian Convention Center. A group of six WFWPI young adults attended an advocacy training session, which helped them to better understand the process afforded by CSW to influence governments and policies in the area of women. Both the side events and the parallel events offer an extraordinary opportunity for greeting and meeting the highest level leaders in the organizations sponsoring CSW, as well as networking opportunities with NGOs throughout the two week period.

One of the highlight of this week was the opportunity to spend time with Prof. Yeon Ah Moon. Throughout the week in informal settings, as well as dinner meetings which she hosted on Tuesday,

Wednesday and Thursday evenings, Prof. Moon shared deeply about the Founder's vision, lifestyle, and how it applies to WFWPI. Leaders had the opportunity to gather and assess WFWPI's current status as an organization and to consider how to develop to the next level.

We would like to acknowledge of the hard work of UN team members Jeanne Carroll and Bonnie Berry for laying the foundation with CSW over the past 13 years. We extend our gratitude to the entire team, Karlsun Allen, Nandi Bengu, Bonnie Berry, Friederike Buczyk, Jamie Carroll, Roshan D'Souza, Heather Fraser-Harris, Noriko Heying, Roudabeh Jamishid Eini, Peter Lewis, Yuri Palhof, Hitoko Perrottet, Youngsoon Quinn, Kiyomi Schmidt, Cynthia Shibuya, Joy Theriot, Nicole Thiessen, Fukunaga Yoshida, and others.

WFWPI would like to acknowledge the growing involvement of young adults in its work. We are looking forward to participating in CSW 60 and are planning for greater impact and involvement.