

# CFUW News:

## Special UNCSW Edition



**Club Presidents are asked to please circulate this UNCSW issue of CFUW News and Updates to all members for their information**

## The Millennium Development Goals

*Susan Murphy,  
CFUW President*

The CFUW delegation to New York and the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women was a group of thirteen enthusiastic, cheerful, and committed women! As the CFUW Acting VP of International Relations, it was my role to lead the group - **Doris Mae Oulton**, UWC Winnipeg; **Myrna Snart**, CFUW Edmonton; **Marianne Singh-Waraich**, CFUW Burlington; **Leila Metcalf** and **Hally Siddons**, CFUW Ottawa; **Faith Matchett**, CFUW Moncton; **Alice Medcof**, CFUW North York and North Toronto; **Glad Bryce**, UWC Toronto; **Roberta Balmer**, CFUW Kanata; **Louise Beaulieu-Steiner**, CFUW Leaside-East York; and **Louise McLeod**, President, and **Shaila Mistry**, from our sister organization, Women Graduates-USA.

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We met several times as a CFUW caucus and were also pleased to join in with the delegation from IFUW led by President **Catherine Bell**. Those IFUW delegates came from Rwanda, Australia, New Zealand, Bulgaria, Switzerland, South Africa, Finland, England and Wales, and Nigeria and were joined by two IFUW staff, and the two IFUW UN volunteer Representatives in New York, who shared many insights with all of us.

The CFUW group spread themselves widely at the UNCSW - observing official Commission of Status of Women meetings attended by the Ambassadors or Ministers from the UN member states who were making statements on the theme of Millennium Development Goals, attending parallel sessions put on by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), side events put on by member states of the UN and major international organizations, consultation days, receptions, films, conversation circles on topics such as health and mental health, shopping at the artisan fair, marching along First Avenue, working in the North American/European caucus on language for the final official statement called the Agreed Conclusions, and meeting and talking with women from all over the world.



The UNCSW is scheduled for two weeks each year and it is rare that members can be there for both weeks. Only Alice Medcof and Louise McLeod managed a few days into week 2.

It is an eye-opening experience to attend the UNCSW. I would highly recommend it, and you will see from the reports that follow that all of our delegation do too!

## UN CSW Consultation Day March 9, 2014

*Susan Murphy,  
CFUW President*

The UNCSW for NGO delegates kicks off on Sunday with a Consultation Day, filled with speeches, panels, and presentations about the theme of each year's Commission, this time - "Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls" - [www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw58-2014](http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw58-2014)

A few highlights - **Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuke** is the new UnderSecretary General of the UN, the Executive Director of UN Women, the second ED in this new entity created in 2011, and previously the Deputy President of South Africa. She told us that there is overwhelming data that women's crucial roles in peace and security, leadership and the economy can make a huge change. She stressed the importance of data - it shows us where to shine the light! She follows in the footsteps of Michelle Bachelet, the first Executive Director, who returned to her home country, and is now the President of Chile.

The outgoing Chair of the Commission, **Carlos Gonzales**, Ambassador to the UN from El Salvador, called for member states



*Photo courtesy of Faith Matchett*

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuke,  
UnderSecretary General of  
the UN

and NGOs to remember the principle of universality, that all of our work must be focused on human beings; they are central to the issues being debated and discussed.

Over 900 NGO delegates attended the Consultation Day - the start to UNCSW!

## Ban Ki-Moon - Secretary General of the UN Speaks on Opening Day of UNCSW

*Susan Murphy,  
CFUW President*

In an unusual gesture and one that reflected the importance of the event, Ban Ki-Moon, the Secretary General of the UN spoke to the Commission assembly on opening day. He committed that gender equality is a key component of the post-2015 agenda of the UN.

However, we are still far from ending disparities for women and girls around the world - low rates of completion of education, low representation in Parliaments, continuing issues with child and maternal health. He gave a shocking statistic about sanitation - one billion people in the world still practice open defecation, and that presents a huge health issue, with a goal to end by 2025. He did point to a growing list of women in leadership - five women are leading UN peace-keeping missions - Sudan, Cyprus, Haiti, Liberia and Cote D'Ivoire. He also highlighted the campaign to end female genital mutilation (FGM) a practice he called "unjustified and barbaric," and ended his speech with the statement that **"We cannot have a free world until gender equality is achieved."**



*Photo courtesy of Faith Matchett*

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon

## **Perspectives on Technology, Safety, and Violence Against Women and Girls**

*Alice Medcof,  
CFUW Delegate*

I attended the parallel event "Perspectives on Technology, Safety, and Violence Against Women and Girls", conducted by the Director of National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), who works closely with the creators of Facebook and is an expert in internet technology.

At the session, participants were told about Spyware, which can be downloaded onto anyone's computer or handheld device without the owner knowing. For example, if an estranged husband has been ordered to stay away from his children the following can happen: the husband can download a spying application onto her phone without her knowing, read all emails and texts, listen in to all conversations, search her device's calendar, etc, and then leave her a message saying "I know what you are doing today." .....and you can imagine the rest....

NNEDV trains police officers, lawyers, judges, politicians when invited to do so. This programme is based in the United States and has affiliates in Australia, United Kingdom and elsewhere. It has also done work in Canada, has affiliates in Australia, United Kingdom and elsewhere.

For more information see the website [www.nnedv.org](http://www.nnedv.org)

## **Snapshots of UNCSW**

*Glad Bryce,  
CFUW Delegate*

The sessions at UNCSW raised awareness of the conditions and circumstances in other parts of the world. Being able to talk with women about their concerns and their lives provided a profound understanding of how important the UNCSW is. The enclosed photos give a visual view of the various countries and cultures attending.



*Photos courtesy of Glad Bryce and Susan Murphy*

[See more photos from UNCSW](#)

## Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) Side Event

*Marianne Singh-Waraich,  
CFUW Burlington*

Maria Percival reviewed the role played by Parliaments as overseers of the implementation of the MDGs. She urged them not to be afraid to be critical and study the lessons derived from the past ten years. Did we mainstream gender equity, for example?

Alessandro reported on his research. He said the IPU follows negotiations on sustainable development goals (SDGs). It is engaged in capacity building. The SDGs will replace the MDGs after 2015.

He advocated gender caucuses in Parliament. He mentioned intimidation and the internal structure of committees. How to mainstream? The SDGs are a partnership of developing and developed nations and are implemented through Parliaments. The MDGs were complete packages of development. They were interconnected. Unfortunately they operated in silos e.g. environment, health, education. They should be integrated to a single development vision.

There should be an annual progress report that measures outcomes versus policies in the plan of future SDGs. Sustainability requires examining the mechanics of implementation.

Two studies were done parallel to the UN Millennium campaign. Lessons can be drawn from the studies. The business of Parliament is conducted in committees with outside stakeholders, civil society and the private sector. Either a caucus or a committee as a structure dedicated to the MDGs or SDGs should be created.

Both would create awareness of the MDGs. A caucus would be more informal and open to more people. It would mean less overhead and red tape but have few resources and no authority to call for a report. It would be open to a power grab by stronger members at the expense of the weak. It would be easier to establish.

A committee would require more time to become established so perhaps a caucus could morph into a committee over time. A committee would have a mandate and resources. It could figure out the cost of programs and relate to donors and make sure external finances reach their goal. In the developed world all donors consult. In the developing world, a committee can signal that dedicated funds are not reaching their goal.

A danger to such a committee would be a weak mandate with a poor relation to the budget. It must guard against becoming a ghetto. Another risk would be to try to do too much causing competition and turf wars. A SDGs committee should be a co-ordinating body. A direct line with the budget committee is key to its success. He ended by advising all Parliaments to go home and create such a committee.

Next we listened to an Argentine Senator who spoke in Spanish. She mentioned that the Security Council now had five female members. She hoped they would do better than their male predecessors. She stated that the MDGs, peace and security are one. Without peace, there can be no development. She said that inside societies on a daily basis, rights are being constructed. In the 20th century women struggled to gain their human rights, both social, cultural and economic.

There are one billion hungry people left in the world, subject to a violent and violated environment. The whole world must take responsibility for this environment. The IPU represents the possibility of co-operation.

The targets of the MDGs are not all met. A lot remains to be done. The dialogue should be global. No country is better off if other countries are not better off.

She advocated formation of regional organizations. Different regions have different social contracts so we cannot have a single economic or development model.

The UN charter is universal. It reaffirms the equal dignity of all men and women. There is no self-contradiction in the MDGs. Violence is evil and destroys universal dignity. There should be intercultural respect. Indicators emerge when we acknowledge diversity. Human rights are at once a challenge and a great achievement.

Questions followed: Is there a caucus or committee in your Parliament? How can Parliament enhance the MDGs?

Morocco stressed the MDGs but was critical of certain issues re health, sex and reproductive rights. It stated that Morocco had made strides and allowed a budget for women to achieve empowerment. There was not enough money to do all they wanted to do but their political will and political stability was a great asset.

Challenge:

1. Assess efforts at gender equity. Check out the different laws and their implementation
2. Examine the political role of women to strengthen capacity

## **CFUW/WG-USA Parallel Session *Universal Primary Education by 2020: In Peril for Afghan Girls?***

*Hally Siddons,  
UNCSW Delegate and Parallel Session Organizer*

Long-time teacher and principal in Pakistani refugee camps and under the Taliban, Fawzia Habibi, is now Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs in the Afghan government. She was profuse in her thanks for international aid to her country but like all our speakers stressed that the remarkable gains in education made amidst the chaos of 30 years of conflict can be quickly reversed without the continued support of the international community. Afghanistan is in no economic position to provide education for its children and girls are particularly vulnerable. She also noted that the harsh



Fawzia Habibi, Deputy  
Minister of Women's Affairs  
in Afghanistan



tribal laws and the remoteness of many regions put education for girls in peril. Like her colleagues, she lists insecurity, suicide attacks, school burnings as seemingly insurmountable barriers to schooling but emphasizes that education is the best way to fight terrorism. While the upcoming election is a key factor in Afghan's future she again urged the international community not to abandon her country in its ongoing fight against violence and its dire need for educational support.

With the help of the international community Afghanistan has transformed its defunct education system of 2001 with less than a million students and no girls, to some ten million students with 41% girls in 16, 500 schools and 210,000 teachers, the most successful legacy of the international community.

So said our second speaker, Asila Wardak (Minister Counsellor to the Afghanistan Permanent Mission to the United Nations) who is a leading human rights and social activist at home. She noted that adult illiteracy is a huge problem which will grow without investment in education and with little access to education, child marriages will increase. The government is now emphasizing community schools that involve parents at every level, is developing teacher training and becoming more creative in addressing many issues. While she concluded that the challenges were huge, her people were strong, resilient and determined to make their country stable and prosperous.

Our third speaker, Shayma Danesho, spoke from the Afghan UNICEF desk where she has a huge mandate for protection, health and education in reconstruction and development projects in her native Afghanistan. UNICEF's main thrust in 2014 will also be community based schools and gender equality, reducing the geographical, ethnic and gender disparities in access, aiming to raise enrollment and retention, and ensuring schooling during emergencies.



Hally Siddons (L) and Leila Metcalf (R)

Hally Siddons, CFUW-Ottawa who presented a compelling PowerPoint setting the stage for the speaker's notes that the audience was large, attentive and their questions revealed their engagement and expertise. Evaluation reports from many countries said the situation was more hopeful than anticipated, people asked for specific ways to get

involved and a Nigerian woman felt she gained knowledge to apply at home.

To begin Leila Metcalf, CFUW-Ottawa had welcomed attendees and recognized the IFUW, CFUW, WG-USA Presidents - Catherine Bell, Susan Murphy and Louise McLeod. In concluding Hally thanked Leila and the other planning committee members, Dianne Rummery (CFUW) and Elise Russo (WG-USA). Follow-up opportunities were provided, and Louise McLeod's reflections brought the session to a close.

## Reflections on UN CSW 58

*Myrna Snart,  
President CFUW Edmonton*

I was encouraged to attend UN CSW58 by a past president of CFUW Edmonton and, after discussions with my family and friends and much reflection, I submitted my name and desire to participate. I am so glad I did as it was an awakening and reconfirming experience.

I made my travel arrangements and confirmed shared accommodation with another CFUW member. I reviewed a UN Fact sheet "We Can END POVERTY" that outlined the eight Millennium Development Goals and provided updates on how close we are to attaining these goals. Given my own personal belief in and commitment to education, knowing CFUW's and IFUW's focus on education and reviewing the forum's offerings, I decided that I would focus my time and attendance on "education" sessions. I *hoped* that I could attend at least three education-related sessions every day. Then the forum began and I was meeting people from around the world and listening to panelists and presenters where the topic was something specific (such as human health or the environment) but its basis was education. I soon realized that my whole week in New York, as both an attendee and a visitor in Manhattan, would be educational!

Just being at the UN was empowering. Our first official session - Consultation Day - was held in the Great Hall at Cooper Union where President Abraham Lincoln had addressed his own divided nation. How much more historic could it get! I loved the IFUW and CFUW briefing sessions and appreciated the opportunity to meet and share experiences with other CFUW and IFUW members.

Parallel sessions about civil society's commitment to women's rights, whether they are educational, financial, health-related or environmental filled me with *hope*.



Myrna Snart (L), CFUW Edmonton, and Marianne Singh-Waraich (R), CFUW Burlington, at Consultation Day

Then I learned about the greater need to discuss human rights, the disaggregation of statistics when discussing the Millennium Development Goals, gender based violence, and people living in poverty. A female Iraqi panelist talked about human rights in her country and how conditions for females in her country are not good, including proposed legislation that child brides be at least nine years old - notwithstanding the rather loud

pronouncement of one fellow who announced that everything this woman said was wrong! I observed an ECOSOC panel who, with other invited participants, discussed the practice of female genital mutilation. A representative from Widows for Peace through Democracy reminded us of child brides becoming widows as young as 12 to 14 years of age - and the attendant discrimination these girls face, through no fault of their own. A presentation by three female economists on the 2008 financial collapse was like a condensed Economics 300 course. The presenters outlined what caused the collapse, the effects (primarily on women and people living in poverty) and the ethical questions raised for organizations like the Norwegian Petroleum Fund (now valued at \$844 billion) which was invested in many of the banks and financial institutions that caused the 2008 financial collapse.

In spite of the international focus, I kept thinking of the human rights issues we must address in Canada - poverty, homelessness, gender inequities, improved education opportunities, family violence. On the other hand, I was struck by the number of women from around the world and the number of young women and young men not just in attendance but actively participating in sessions and discussions. So I remain *hopeful*.

## In Retrospect: UNCSW 58

*Roberta Ostler Balmer,  
CFUW Delegate*

"No country can act wisely simultaneously in every part of the globe at every moment of time" - Henry A. Kissinger. In the year 2000 as the world began the new Millennium, the Member States of the United Nations gathered at its headquarters in New York to consult together on the most urgent priorities for building a peaceful and equitable future for all the peoples of the world.

**The Millennium Declaration** - This is the product of the 2000 deliberations and emphasizes global solidarity from the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people and the strengthening of the capacity of all countries to implement these rights.

**The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** The eight goals-1) to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, 2) achieve universal primary education, 3) promote gender equality, 4) reduce child mortality, 5) improve maternal health, 6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, 7) ensure environmental sustainability, and 8) global partnership for development.

The eight goals identified some of the most pressing issues and offered targets/aims for addressing these issues and the corresponding inequities. Suggestions were made for measuring the success of programs and policies implemented to affect change. However the targets do not encompass the substantive change required to meet the goals. Therefore the MDGs helped to create, to some extent, a measurement of a country's programs and policies in addressing its most urgent social issues, but it is flawed if the attempt is merely to meet a statistic, not implement lasting social change.

Confucius said: "When it is obvious that the goals cannot be reached, don't adjust the goals, adjust the change". The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This year at the Forum (CSW58) the gathering will evaluate the Millennium Development Goals and negotiate agreed conclusions (new policy recommendations) towards accelerating their implementation. Also under review are the access and participation of women and girls to education, training science and technology and the promotion of women's access to full employment and decent work.

One of our main responsibilities as participants is advocacy. We, as individuals, are the voice of civil society. We can support or negate our Governments. We can meet with delegates, formulate implementation strategies while learning lobbying techniques and advocacy skills. So let us pursue our individual and collective strengths. "Talking isn't doing it, it is a kind of a good deed to say well and yet words are not actions" - Shakespeare.

Attending the CSW forums can be somewhat overwhelming. Choosing which session to attend and executing good time management is of the essence. Part of the Global Campaign to celebrate Beijing +20, in an effort to "scale up and speed up" is an effort to build a virtual global community. I have already

seen commercials and soap operas bearing messages on reducing violence against women which are whirling through underdeveloped countries, to great acclaim.

## Two Parallel Sessions of Note

*Roberta Ostler Balmer,  
CFUW Delegate*

### **Blue is the new Pink: Gender equality for all**

The panel in this session comprised two men, a University Professor/singer and a poet. Both were reiterating how hard it is to be what your parents expect of you and to fit into the categories of persona as set down by peers in high school. This session was dealing with encouraging women into traditionally male roles and men into traditionally female roles. Men are important allies in breaking gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality.

### **Where are the girls and women: Exploring the gender gap in Science and Technology**

This session was sponsored by L'Oreal USA. A panel of women, all experts and functioning in high powered positions. An empowering practical group. Proving beyond doubt that the women are perfectly capable of occupying top positions in business and academia as well as being experts in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mechanics.

A member of the audience was asking for suggestions for her job search "give me your card" was the immediate response... and we know that something will be done about her situation.

The forum was a flurry of business, advocacy and networking (some socializing too). We are on the same wavelength. We may or may not make a difference, for when "women succeed, the world succeeds" NA Caucus.

My sentiments are with Buddha: "I never see what has been done, I only see what remains to be done."

## What are UN CSW "Agreed Conclusions"?

*Susan Murphy,  
CFUW President*

The UNCSW formal meetings of member states each year are focused on reaching agreement on a document known as the "Agreed Conclusions". The theme of each year's Commission is

the basis for this agreement and the intent is to get consensus among the member states to move the agenda forward for women and girls. Agreed conclusions are not binding on members, but do get wide distribution and publicity and, over time, do have significant influence on other UN bodies, governments, other world bodies, NGOs and citizens.

While parallel sessions, side events and networking with potential partners are taking place, there is work behind the scenes on a very long draft agreed conclusions document; in this case, over thirty pages in its second revision. Each member state, including Canada, contributes to the negotiations on language. It is an arduous task, made all the more difficult because of coalitions of states that do not support women's rights in the way we take for granted in our part of the world; the determination of some to focus on the family rather than families the broader term which goes beyond relationships between men and women.

What did CFUW do with the Agreed Conclusions? In February, National Office staff attended a briefing hosted by the Canadian Labour Congress with Status of Women Canada staff; we hosted a session with the National Council of Women of Canada and SWC, and prepared our response to government on the major issues in the deliberations on the draft conclusions. While delegates were in NY, the first major revision was issued and we reviewed that document along with the proposed revisions from the CLC which they shared with CFUW.

Through the speed of email and use of the internet, we were able to connect with staff at NO, review suggested revisions, and submit a second letter to SWC staff, at the UNCSW, focusing on our concerns about violence against women, education and reproductive health, among others. It is amazing what can be done now with technology! The UN CSW sessions are streamed, the draft documents are posted on the internet for all to see, Facebook, Twitter and other social media are being used to great advantage, and the work of caucuses, NGO groups and member states all is accessible around the world.

The final version of the Agreed Conclusions is available on the UN CSW 58 website. It is a document calling for a gender stand-alone goal and for mainstreaming gender in all other goals and targets. It includes important reference to women's human rights defenders' role in the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and governments were urged to take action to eliminate violence against women and girls and address its underlying causes. Many specific issues did not get the attention hoped for, but there was also no rollback of rights and generally, reaching consensus was a positive step towards the post-2015 agenda

Many thanks to the delegates for their contributions, and to **Robin Jackson**, Executive Director, **Tara Fischer**, Advocacy Coordinator, for all of their work to support CFUW's work at the CSW and to **Janice Pillon** for her work in putting together this newsletter.

