

Anglican Consultative Council's delegation to the 49th Session of the UNCSW (2005)

The unity of the Anglican Communion was positively demonstrated when 41 women from 27 provinces gathered as the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) delegation to the 49th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) meeting in New York 28 February - 11 March 2005. With others we examined the theme from the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) to review the implementation of the BPfA and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled 'Women 2000: Gender equality, development and peace for the 21st century'.

As we came together to listen to each other in honesty and trust, we developed a greater understanding of the body of Christ, recognizing the hurt and pain, hopes and joys of women and children across the Communion, and with one voice we endorsed the reaffirmation of the BPfA.

During our two weeks of meetings we reflected on the 12 planks of the BPfA based on a questionnaire circulated in advance. In small group discussions and regional caucuses, delegates were able to identify the most pressing women's concerns. The delegation highlighted four areas of major importance which impede world-wide development: poverty, poor education, violence and lack of access to good, affordable healthcare. These areas were the basis for consultations, which enabled delegates to discern God's call for their personal commitment and action as part of the Church's participation in God's mission for the world.

While acknowledging the strides many governments have taken to implement the BPfA, this delegation calls strongly for continued action with increased resources both human and financial, to ensure concrete results through programs of education and legislation.

We call on the ACC to affirm the advancements our governments have made regarding the status of women and encourage them to continue in this work. We strongly recommend the ACC continues to affirm the International Anglican Women's Network (IAWN) and again call on the ACC to adopt the goal of 30% representation of women in decision making bodies at all levels in our Anglican Communion. We call on the ACC to aim for 50% representation by the year 2010, to reflect more justly the current makeup of our Anglican global communion.

This year, 27 provinces responded to the challenge to be represented at the UNCSW. We are grateful to everyone who has made it possible to finance and give their time to this venture. We ask the ACC to encourage those unrepresented this year to demonstrate their solidarity with the women of the Anglican Communion by sending delegates to the next, 50th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

We look forward to a time when the Anglican Communion, as part of the body of Christ, brings women's and men's voices into balance and so reflect the true and inclusive nature of God.