

Report to Anglican Consultative Council on Women 2000: Beijing+5

February - March 2000 Meeting

This is the Report to the Anglican Consultative Council on the participation of Anglicans at the 44th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held from 28 February to 17 March, 2000, New York, New York, USA.

The Commission on the Status of Women is acting as the preparatory committee for **Women 2000: Beijing+5**, known officially as **The United Nations Special Session of the General Assembly: Women 2000: Gender, Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century**.

Introduction

The UN Special Session will be held 5 to 9 June 2000 in New York, five years after the Fourth UN World Conference on Women. Beijing. It will appraise and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (NFLS) and the Beijing Platform for Action (PLA), and to consider further actions and initiatives toward that end. The General Assembly designated the Commission on the Status of Women as the preparatory committee (PrepCom) for the review.

The Anglican Communion has Observer status at the United Nations. The interim Anglican Observer is the Right Reverend Herbert A. Donovan, Jr. (editor's note: the 2002 Observer is Archdeacon Taimalelagi Fagamalama Tuatagaloa-Matalavea). Address: Episcopal Church Center, 815 2nd Avenue, New York, New York 10017 USA. Telephone: 212-867-8400, Fax: 212-867-7767.

Anglican Participants

The Anglican Consultative Council is a NGO (non governmental organization) in consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). As such, it is entitled to send 5 participants to the CSW. The Anglican delegation was coordinated by Ann Smith, Director of Women's Ministries for ECUSA; and, as schedules permitted, was made up of:

- Sarah Anderson (US)
- Sally Bucklee (US)
- Marjorie Burke (US)
- Mable Katahirwe, EDS (Uganda)
- Alice Medcof (Canada)
- Pauline Muchina, UTS (Kenya)
- Julia Mulaha (Kenya)
- Ann Smith, ECUSA (US)

The above-named were registered under the auspices of the ACC.

Many other Anglican women were present, representing a variety of NGOs.

Ways in which Women could engage in the process

1. Voting members of the CSW

The Commission on the Status of Women has 45 members who each have four year terms. Countries represented are:

- Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Burundi
- Chile, China, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba
- Denmark, Dominican Republic
- Egypt, Ethiopia
- France
- Germany, Ghana
- India, Iran, Italy
- Japan
- Democratic Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan
- Lesotho, Lithuania
- Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco
- Norway
- Paraguay, Peru, Poland
- Russian Federation, Rwanda
- Saint Lucia, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Sudan
- Thailand, Turkey
- Uganda, United Kingdom

The official representatives of these countries were both women and men, and they have voting privileges on the CSW Outcome Document.

2. Delegates from each UN Member state

All members of the UN are engaged in refining the two draft working papers: The Official Declaration and the Outcome Document. They could submit their comments on the papers in advance of the 44th session of the CSW, and could send delegations to the UN to engage in the ongoing dialogue throughout the session. Most of the people comprising the country delegations are women.

The countries grouped themselves into:

- EU - European Union
- JUSCANZ - Japan, USA, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Lichenstein, Austria, Iceland
- G77+China - Mainly developing nations
- Holy See

3. Many, many NGOs

There are hundreds of organizations which have consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Those who could, sent women to speak on their behalf. Organizations with similar interests, formed caucuses, for example:

- Health Caucus
- Violence Against Women Caucus
- Youth Caucus
- Religion Caucus
- and so forth

The caucuses met as needed, formulated new wording for the Outcome Document, strategized how to lobby those with voting privileges, organized educational programs, such as panel discussions and distributed informational material.

4. Sitting and listening

As much as possible, the UN allowed everyone to attend the working sessions. Daily, NGOs would meet at 9:00 a.m. for a briefing. Individual member nations, such as the USA and Canada, held regular meetings for their NGOs. WomenAction published a daily newspaper. It was easy to be in constant information overload.

Women of Faith at the United Nations

Included in the United Nations Charter is the recognition that spirituality is an integral part of human nature. The Beijing Platform for Action was the first major UN document to say so explicitly.

Related Links:

- [Beijing Platform for Action](#) External Link
- [Strategic Objectives from the Platform for Action](#)

This was the result of so very many women of faith going to Beijing and making the point that their spirituality was the driving force behind their concern for humankind. Anglicans were amongst them. Indeed, at noon, everyday Anglicans gathered in the Peace Tent to pray. The "Noonday Prayer for Beijing" and the document "Religion in the Platform for Action" are appended.

At the 44th session of the CSW, there were a variety of religious views represented. Very broadly, they can be divided into three groups:

Group 1. The Holy See

Group 2. The who oppose the PFA

Group 3. The who support the PFA

The Holy See signed the PFA in 1995. It seemed to be quite conservative in its approach to making the PFA a stronger document form women's rights and safety.

Group 2, those who oppose the PFA, numbered up to 50 persons at a time. They could be easily distinguished by blue buttons on which was printed FAMILY. This extreme right wing group, sponsored by a recently authorized NGO, REAL Canada, believes that if everyone lived in a faithful monogamous (mother and father) family, or lived a celibate life, all women would be happy, hence there is no need for the PFA. They were visible, vocal, and disruptive and caused distress to the women whom they confronted, threatened, or stalked. The women's caucus of the EU sent a strongly worded letter to the UN authorities. It is hoped that the presence of this right wing group and its tactics will not result in all religious groups being barred from the UN.

Anglican Women

Women who identified themselves as Anglican fell into Group 3

- They met on their own for spiritual nurture and to set an agenda for the future of Anglican women.
- They allied themselves with all others in Group 3 as opportunity permitted.
- **Ecumenical Women 2000 Plus** numbered over 30 women from Episcopal UN Office, Church Women United, General Board of Global Ministries, Lutheran World Federation, Presbyterian UN Office, National Council of Churches of Christ, and the YWCA.
- **Religion Counts**, an interfaith caucus, chaired by Marion Stevens, an Anglican from South Africa, met daily to support one another, discuss how to make women of faith visible, and to plan programs.
- Visibility was achieved by the distribution of small pink stickers which said, "Women of Faith *believe* in the PFA"
- A petition in support of Tibetan Buddhist nuns was prepared and circulated.

Programs were organized.

One was "Religion: Women's Liberation, Women's Bondage: Religion and the Platform for Action". Panelists were Jean Hardisty, Riffat Hassan (Muslim), Teresia Hinga (Roman Catholic), the Rev. Rose Abby (Presbyterian, Ghana).

Another was "Religious for the PFA." Panelists were Marion Stevens (Anglican), Frances Kissling (Catholics for a Free Choice), Ani Choying Drolma (Buddhist Nun), and Karen Manz (Lutheran).

The speakers on these panels supported the view that religion can be a liberating force in women's lives, or it can be a tool for their oppression. Religious teachings from different faith traditions have often sanctioned violence against women, including domestic violence, rape and female genital mutilation. Despite such religiously sanctioned violence, women of faith from various traditions have worked within their traditions to offer new interpretations of religious teachings and to advocate that their institutions help end violence against women. Women are transforming their religious traditions, denouncing patriarchal teachings and offering new interpretations that liberate women from oppression.

Next Step for Women Of Faith

- Keep Bishop Donovan [Archdeacon Tuatagaloa-Matalavea] up to date so the he [she] can confer with his [her] counterparts from as informed a stance as possible.
- Determine what the Anglican Communion's position is on the PFA. Were steps taken based on the PFA in 1995? How have we attended to the promises made? Should further steps be taken.
- The International Anglican Women's Network had as one of its principles the PFA. Has an assessment been done on our performance since our founding in 1996.
- Poverty is one of the most disempowering aspects of women's lives. Are there gender specific guidelines for assigning relief and development money in budgets in all provinces of the Anglican Communion? (For example, the Canadian Primate's Relief and Development Fund has gender guidelines biased towards projects which benefit women).
- Education is crucial for women in developing nations. Taking the ECUSA Women of Vision training programs worldwide is money well spent. Holding global conferences also results in new learnings that "spin off" to many women "back home."
- It is women who are most aware of women's human rights, and how these rights are being limited. It is beneficial to have directors in the national Church Houses that are sensitized to these issues.
- Create a list of e-mail addresses of the Anglican women who were at the CSW meeting and circulate this list to everyone on the list.
- Continue to link ecumenically.
- Support the World March of Women 2000.

Web sites and email addresses

UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

304 East 45th Street, 15th Floor

website: www.unifem.undp.org

e-mail: unifem@undp.org

International Women's Tribune Centre

777 UN Plaza, 3rd Floor

e-mail: iwtc@igc.org

Conference of NGOs (CONGO)

NGO Status of Women Committee

777 UN Plaza, 8th Floor

e-mail: congongo@aol.com

UN Division of the Advancement of Women

UN Plaza, 12th Floor

website: www.un.org/daw

e-mail: daw@un.org

WomenWatch UN

website: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw

WomenAction 2000 (NGO)

website: www.womenaction.org

e-mail: info@womenaction.org