**Fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

**UN Headquarters**

**February 25th to March 7th, 2007**

From February 25 to March 7, governments and civil society gathered at the United Nations to discuss “Financing for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment”. The CSW took place in the lead-up to the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Qatar in 29 November- 2 December 2008 <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/doha/index.htm>. Given this upcoming review of Financing for Development, this year’s CSW was a difficult negotiation for it implied, hopefully, an integration of the Agreed Conclusions in regards to promoting gender equality within this framework. [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/AC\_resolutions/L.8\_Advance unedited\_as corrected.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/AC_resolutions/L.8_Advance%20unedited_as%20corrected.pdf)

Five resolutions were resolutions adopted on:

* Release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/AC\_resolutions/Final L1 Release of women and children taken hostageunedited.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/AC_resolutions/Final%20L1%20Release%20of%20women%20and%20children%20taken%20hostageunedited.pdf)
* Ending female genital mutilation <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/AC_resolutions/Final%20L1%20Release%20of%20women%20and%20children%20taken%20hostageunedited.pdf>
* Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/AC\_resolutions/Final L3 Palestinian women - advance unedited.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/AC_resolutions/Final%20L3%20%20Palestinian%20women%20%20-%20advance%20unedited.pdf)
* Strengthening of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/AC\_resolutions/Final L4 INSTRAW - Advance unedited.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/AC_resolutions/Final%20L4%20INSTRAW%20-%20Advance%20unedited.pdf)
* Women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/AC\_resolutions/Final L5 women, the Girl Child and HIVAIDS - advance unedited.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/AC_resolutions/Final%20L5%20women,%20the%20Girl%20Child%20and%20HIVAIDS%20-%20advance%20unedited.pdf)

This year’s CSW registered the highest number of NGO participants in several years with over 5,000 women’s rights activists in attendance. Conservative groups from the United States were also in attendance, and unsuccessfully lobbied delegations on the Agreed Conclusions, FGM and HIV/AIDS resolutions. It was clear that their tactics annoyed delegates, getting more rejection than sympathy from delegates.

With the introduction of SRHR language in the Agreed Conclusions by the Nordic countries, there were a number of objections by some countries such as India and Mexico, expressing the need for “staying focused on financing and not touching upon other issues which are controversial and are unrelated to the topic at hand”. It was interesting to see how middle income countries saw financing for women’s health as something that is completely outside of gender budgeting.

The negotiations were closed to NGOs after the first day, making it difficult for women’s groups to gather information and lobby governments. Women’s groups protested and sent letters to the bureau, but were not allowed in the room for the remainder of the meeting. Civil society was represented in many government delegations and they became an important bridge between women’s groups and government delegates.

Perhaps the highlight during this year’s CSW was mobilizing women from around the world in joining the Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign. More than 250 organizations have now joined the campaign and were busy asking their governments the tough questions, such as how they would support the UN’s capacity to really work for women on the ground with little field presences on the ground, a very small budget, and no decision-making power within the system. Hundreds of women heeded the call to GEAR UP and lobbied Member States to include language of this in the final document.

The ISRRC coalition actively participated during the two-week sessions to advocate for the inclusion of positive references to sexual and reproductive health in the Agreed Conclusions and to weaken the opposition’s work to damage the sexual and reproductive rights agenda, as well as actively advocated for GEAR and participated in morning NGO briefings, the linkage caucus, regional caucuses, and the ISRRC meetings.

**Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR)**

The GEAR campaign was formally launched during the CSW on February 26, where the Global and Regional Focal Points presented the history and goals of the campaign and urged women’s groups and interested organizations to join.

The GEAR campaign highlighted the under-resourcing of the women’s entities in the UN system and the need for a stronger, consolidated, higher status women’s entity.  It is well-demonstrated that the lack of a strong, well-resourced women’s entity with normative and operational responsibilities, and an effective presence at country level, led by an Under Secretary General, has impeded the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Campaign’s message, carried by hundreds of women at the CSW, to “GEAR UP” was taken up by over 40 countries, where they mentioned in their national statements the need to strengthen the UN’s institutional mechanisms on gender equality and called for a consolidated entity led by an Under Secretary General. The Agreed Conclusions note “under-resourcing in the area of gender equality in the UN system…….and  stresses the need for more effective tracking of resources….spent on enhancing gender equality….” (para 19)  The Agreed Conclusions specifically call for strengthening the UN system both through more effective gender mainstreaming and for “enhancing its capacity to effectively assist States….on gender equality and women’s empowerment….and to make adequate and reliable human and financial resources available.”  (para kk). Liberia, MERCOSUR, Mexico, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Canada, EU, Australia, Philippines and New Zealand were the countries who pushed for stronger language on GEAR.

The next steps in terms of the GEAR campaign will be to convey to the General Assembly, and particularly the facilitators for following up on the recommendations of the High Level Panel on System-wide Coherence, the broad support from governments and civil society for moving forward on a stronger institutional mechanism for women that can deliver real improvements in women’s daily lives.

**SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS COALITION**

The International Women’s Health Coalition led the ISRRC meetings every morning at 9:00 A.M. for a briefing on different delegations’ positions, lobbying strategies, and working on inserting our language with the objective to have a common strategy among the SRR organizations. These meetings provided a safe space for colleagues to talk freely about advocacy strategies.

Those organizations that were with us the first week really helped setting the basis for our advocacy in the second week. They were effective in presenting our interests in lobbying friendly governments so that during the negotiations week they reflected our language. Women’s rights organizations and activists around the world successfully influenced certain delegations, particularly the EU, Canada, New Zealand, Fiji, and Mercosur (Argentina speaking on behalf of Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Venezuela and Colombia). These were also, together with Egypt, Cuba, Syria, China and Japan, Suriname (CARICOM) the most outspoken delegations during this year’s negotiations.

In addition, we worked closely together with the Canadian and New Zealand delegations on the HIV/AIDS resolution.

**ANALYSIS OF THE NEGOCIATIONS**

The negotiations on the Agreed Conclusions were closed to NGOs from the second day. This made it very difficult for us to keep track of which delegations were outspoken about the issues we were concentrating on. Nonetheless, we had enough contacts both within delegations as through colleagues in official delegations who were able to send us constant drafts of the text which we commented on.

Sexual and reproductive health

The governments of Norway and New Zealand took the lead in pushing for explicit language on financing for women’s health, including their sexual and reproductive health. Countries that supported this proposal were: Switzerland, CARICOM, Mexico Canada, Cuba, Denmark, Israel, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Italy, UK, Iceland, Estonia, Slovenia, Spain, Portugal, Austria, and Turkey. Countries that opposed this language were: Syria, Ireland, Malta, and Poland.

Although it was problematic to have the EU split over SRH language, it also allowed for more voices of support to include the provisions.

Importantly also, was the paragraph agreed upon which highlights the necessity to achieve universal access to reproductive health (as set out in ICPD, instead of highlighting that it is a new target of the MDGs). This was proposed by CARICOM and sustained by many countries, resulting in its inclusion into the final document.

New Zealand and Norway were the most supportive on including rights-based language in this area on reproductive health. The opposition groups worked with their usual allies such as Kiribati, Syria, Egypt, and others to propose language that refers to: “ensure sufficient resources are allocated for access to basic and maternal, newborn and child health care to provide a safe outcome for mother and child”, however they were unsuccessful in getting this language into the final document.

GEAR

Not surprisingly, the proposed GEAR language was controversial. Egypt, Japan, US, Russia, CARICOM, Cuba asked for the deletion of the paragraph that called for a strong, consolidated women’s entity proposed by Liberia and supported by Norway, Canada, Iceland, EU, Mexico, Switzerland, Australia, Philippines and New Zealand.

MERCOSUR and Switzerland both made weaker proposals but that still had important elements in them, such as the need for strengthening financial commitments to these bodies, having strong leadership, resources, and status.

**HIV/AIDS Resolution**

We were successful in ensuring that the HIV resolution retained all of the strength from the previous 2006 resolution on the same subject. It includes references to the following:

* The Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights
* Violence against women and girls, including marital rape. The inclusion of marital rape is often controversial.
* Calls for intensifying implementation of Beijing and ICPD commitments
* Reaffirms the commitment to achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015
* Calls for gender equality resources within AIDS responses
* Calls for increased prevention efforts for women and girls, young people and adolescents, including ensuring that prevention takes into account their particular impact on women.

New references were also added on prevention, treatment, care and support for older women and women with disabilities. In the case of older women, this is significant as it acknowledges the prevention needs of older women, and not only their role in providing care and support.