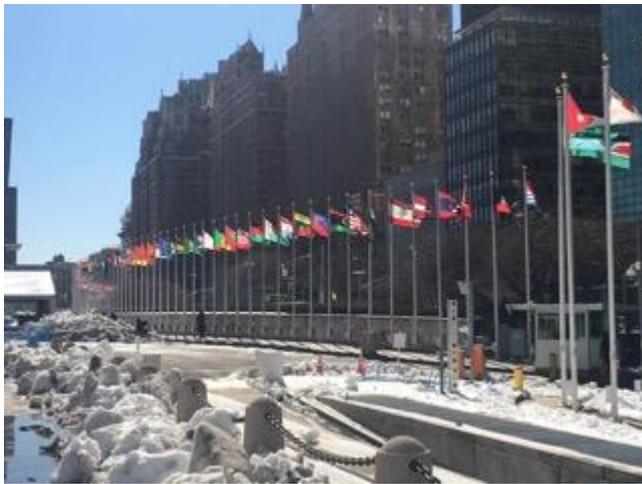


## SIGBI President's Blog – April 2017

At the beginning of the month, it was a pleasure to attend SI Abergavenny's club evening to mark St David's day with members of my own Club. We enjoyed a talk from the Blaenafon Cheese Company, had a quiz about Welsh facts and enjoyed a lovely supper. This was a good example of being part of the Soroptimist family as for many years SI Abergavenny, SI Cwmbran and SI Newport (now closed) have taken it in turn to organise a get together to mark this important day in the Welsh calendar. The serious side of the evening was to continue support for the charity Toilet Twinning which SI Abergavenny and all Clubs in South Wales have supported over the last two years. In time honored tradition, there was a raffle and I was the lucky recipient of the first prize which was a twinned toilet. I shall proudly display it.



On the 11th March 2017, I set off for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York. This is an amazing opportunity to interact with Soroptimists from across the world who formed part of the 80-strong soroptimist delegation. It was also a chance to mix with 8600+ women and men – the largest number of attendees seen at CSW, who all have the same aim which is to improve the lives of women and girls. I chose to attend the Youth Forum as an observer on the Sunday where there was

much talk about how we engage men to achieve gender equality. They also ran a series of workshops and I went along to one on social media and how to create a successful campaign. I know that many of us are skeptical about Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat and Messenger to name a few. However, the reality is that there are 1.8 billion people on Facebook and 1.2 billion on WhatsApp, and we were told that 150 million people connect to a charity page each month so this is an important channel for us to master if we want to reach people about the causes we care about as well as recruit new members. Whilst the numbers made me sit up and listen, what I took away from the session was that social media is about people and connecting people with each other. Two great examples of that are the Movember campaign for prostate cancer and the Ice Bucket Challenge for motor neurone disease which reached millions of people on Facebook and also raised millions of pounds for associated charities. Food for thought!



I was very privileged to attend the opening session of the commission in the chamber and listen to Antonio Guterres UN Secretary General talk about the theme for this year's commission. He stated that the empowerment of women was a key priority, and would involve breaking down structural barriers in Governments, Institutions and Companies to

achieve it. He also said that we need the support of all men to achieve it and that action, targets and benchmarks were needed which women across the world should then use to hold them to their promises. Phumzile Mbambo-Ngcuka Executive Director UN Women also spoke and titled her speech “Constructive Impatience for Change” so in other words change is not happening fast enough, and that there was equally an erosion of gains in some areas. She hoped that CSW 61 would be the much needed accelerator for the implementation and achievement of the 2030 Agenda.



Thank you to Nisha Ghosh APD who presented at the Soroptimist International side event entitled “[Opening the Door to Economic Empowerment for Women and Girls](#)” on the work done by Clubs in Soroptimist International of Great Britain & Ireland on disposable and re-usable sanitary wear.

The weather was interesting on the first Tuesday of CSW – a significant snow storm (so a good job that I took my snow boots)

although not as bad in New York as predicted. Altogether a great experience and you certainly see how Soroptimists from across the world use our UN status to great effect to influence the discussions and achieve an outcome document that has some bite to it!

Please read the blogs on the SIGBI and Soroptimist International website about CSW and take the opportunity in your Clubs to learn more about the United Nations and are work in it through the UN reps.

Looking forward to April and attending events in St Albans and Scotland as well as our second Federation Management Board meeting of the year.

Ann Hodgson  
SIGBI President 2016-2017