

SIGBI Programme Director's Blog April 2019



Assistant Programme Director Advocacy, Margaret Clark

We start the Spring Season with sunshine, smiles and hope. **'A smile is the same in every language'** and that is what we saw in New York at the Commission on the Status of Women **CSW63**. Women were smiling through all diversities sharing sisterhood and friendships and hoping for UN CSW63 Agreed Conclusions.

[Read the unedited Agreed Conclusions document.](#)
A [summary of the Agreed Conclusions](#) is on the UN Women's website.

It was with pride our **SIGBI delegation** of representatives from the caucuses **Africa, Asia /Pacific, Latin America/ Caribbean, and North America/Europe** attended and participated in sessions working with enthusiasm to grasp as much information and knowledge as we could, maximising time and energy in a very busy schedule. Then trying to reflect on the learning, linking here as always with our other Federations. Seeing and influencing our country Ambassadors and gender equality representatives and allowing the occasion to seep into our very pores.

The theme this year was on **Social Protection** and the two weeks were intense and fulfilling, with the objectives of getting voices heard and ultimately to gain agreement for the outcomes. Everyone had a story to tell, from listening to a young trafficked woman and her rescue, to hearing a personal horrific story of female genital mutilation (FGM), to campaigning on the gender pay gap, unpaid care work, women in business and decision making and the extent of domestic violence atrocities to name a few.



Women's rights are experiencing **'pushback'** and it is even said there is 'pushback' on the 'pushback'. The difficult process of achieving agreed conclusions this year highlighted the worrying issues worldwide and the need for closer collaboration, understanding and tolerance. In some areas success was in retaining the agreements of last year's CSW62, for example on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Hilary Clinton's famous message, **'Women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights, one and for all,'** are as relevant and as important today as they were 24 years ago when delivered in Beijing where the Beijing Platform for Action was agreed.

There will be great celebrations throughout the world next year for the **Beijing Platform for Action's 25th Anniversary: Accelerating the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.**

No decision has been made yet as to where these will be held but France and Mexico have offered to host, providing space for the global north and the global south. Some favour one super large event and others many events with wider geographical coverage. It's wait and see. Just start saving!

Now we have a duty to implement the hard fought **Agreed Conclusions** for women's rights and human rights.

How can we do this? We do not want regression.

Listen, learn, lobby in every country, in every region, in every club and as individuals. Reach out to everyone wherever you are and **embrace every opportunity** to have your **voice heard**. The UN Secretary General has called for Civil Society to **work together** at all levels intersectional and intergenerational.

As Soroptimists we have a global voice. We can make the changes we want to see by educating empowering and enabling women and girls and creating a brighter future, achieving the **SDGs and 2030 Agenda**.

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