



Helene Reardon-Bond OBE,
Head of UK Women's National Machinery

We are back in the UK following CSW and I wish to thank you all for your continued support and cooperation in the run up to, and during CSW. This newsletter gives a further update of the UK's CSW programme, and features a CSW report from Annette Lawson, co-chair of the UK NGO CSW Alliance.

CSW59 was an opportunity to recommit to advancing the opportunities and rights of women and girls everywhere, to fulfilling the promises made in Beijing in 1995, and to ensuring women and girls are placed at the heart of the post-2015 development agenda.

The UK delegation led by Baroness Northover worked hard to promote the rights of women and girls, and I am proud of the work UK civil society carried out in NY also.

The IPU Parliamentarian delegation, Baroness Hodgson; Roberta Blackman-Wood MP; Diane Abbott MP and Gavin Shaker MP, were extremely active at CSW and chaired and participated in several UK NGO events.

CSW may have ended for another year but we will not be complacent. We will work to ensure that gender equality is placed firmly at the heart of the post-2015 development goals and also welcome the 15th anniversary of UN resolution 1325 this year. We are aware that much remains to be done, and that NGOs are especially concerned about the absence of references to human rights of women and girls and Civil Society in the CSW59 outcome documents but we will continue to work tirelessly to achieve gender equality for all women and all girls. To do so we are keen to work with a wide and diverse NGO audience so please do circulate this amongst your networks and organisations.

Best wishes

Helene



Salla Saastamoinen, European Commission, Danish Minister Manu Sareen, Helene Reardon Bond, GEO, Laura Higgins, Safer Internet Centre and Kenneth Reinicke, Roskilde University.

Baroness Northover's programme

During her visit Baroness Northover spoke at well-attended side events on disability and development, women's economic empowerment, changing social norms, and the importance of clean energy.

In an event co-hosted by the UK, Italy, Zambia and Liberia, the Minister kept up momentum from the July 2014 Girl Summit and pressed for action to tackle female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage.

The Baroness had a number of bi-laterals with countries from Africa, Latin America, Australia and the US. She also met with various UN Agencies.



Baroness Northover, DfID, Sir Mark Lyall Grant, UK Ambassador to NY, and Helene Reardon Bond, GEO address UK civil society

Thursday 12 March

At the NGO briefing on Thursday we had presentations from the Women, Peace and Security lead at the UK Mission; a presentation from a member of the UK armed forces who told us about their experiences on a peacekeeping operation in DRC; and from the new UK Independent Anti-slavery Commissioner Kevin Hyland. Kevin participated in a side event on Modern Slavery at CSW. You will find further information about the Commissioner's role and the UK's Modern Slavery Bill on gov.uk

Friday 13 March

On Friday Helene Reardon-Bond spoke at a side event on "body confidence and self-esteem: unlocking girls' full potential" which was organised by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts with Dove. You can read the speech Helene gave [here](#)

At the Friday NGO briefing remaining NGOs had the opportunity to come together to discuss the week and look ahead to the next.

Week 2

Working Methods Resolution

In the second week negotiations resumed on the Working Methods resolution. Whilst much of the text had been agreed before CSW (which in itself was a cause for concern for many NGOs) there were still a large number of paragraphs open.

After a late night session it was agreed with some very positive language. Whilst we would all have liked to do more, the consensus was that this was not the right time to be pushing for progress on too many fronts. As it is we got some good language on human rights, the role of civil society and some interesting innovations on the way CSW will operate in future. The delegation also attended and contributed to plenary discussions, side events and bilateral meetings with stakeholders.

Outcome documents from CSW59 will be posted [on the CSW website](#)



Charles Ramsden, GEO with Lynda Dearlove, Women at the Well UK and Pat Black, Soroptimists.

CSW59: an NGO perspective

Well, it came in like a lion but went out much like a mewling kitten with nice markings – so worth keeping although not for proudly displaying at the next Big Cat show.

For civil society the weekend before CSW opened was a triumphant display – first with the Youth Forum held all day on the Saturday and then on the Sunday, with the consultation day, the opening of the NGO Forum organised by New York NGOCSW committee. As we arrived we were greeted by Harlem’s Queen Mother and Ambassador to Africa, Dr Delois Blakely, herself. We were treated to inspiring speeches and it even sounded as if there might be something to celebrate about women’s advancement since Beijing in 1995. The excitement continued with the UN Women organised March for Gender Equality that began from the Dag Hammerskold Plaza outside the UN and marched to Times Square.



Jan Grasty and Magdalena Randall Schab, UN Women UK with Annette Lawson, NAWO

CSW opened on Monday, March 9, with the adoption of the Political Declaration negotiated by governments in advance. Civil Society was angry. We in the UK are fortunate in having a strong relationship with the GEO who lead on CSW and so had opportunities to comment on the Declaration beforehand and consult with each other and our negotiators, but many – perhaps most – had not. Despite the best efforts of members such as the UK and Europe generally, and other ‘like-minded’ states, it was weak and the shape of what was to come was heralded by it. Civil society Caucuses organised by UN regions, wrote damning statements – Africa and Asia Pacific first. The UK NGO CSW Alliance decided Europe needed to declare its position too and with the European Women’s Lobby, also published a statement regretting the Declaration’s lack of ambition and a process that largely excluded civil society from contributing.

Meanwhile, as usual, the important networking and learning of civil society and governments alike was intense – with really extraordinarily varied and excellent side-events as well as formal panels in intergovernmental sessions. The UK put on three very interesting events.

The UK NGO CSW Alliance held morning briefings for all UK NGOs who wished to attend in the lovely offices of the Baha’i (BIC) next door to the UN. And in the evenings of the first week, we attended useful briefings at the UK UN Mission. Some of us were hosted, as usual, by the UK Ambassador to the UN, Sir Mark Lyall Grant, at a UK reception. Representing the UK NGO CSW Alliance and all UK-based NGOs, I presented him with a copy of our report, UK Women: Rights and Progress. I commented that it was women’s rights we kept trying to achieve at CSW and it was getting harder.

The second outcome document, the Working Methods Resolution, was expected to offer a transformation of CSW (albeit within its UN mandate of course) but it fell short of that. It

seems the fire in the bellies of many member states has gone out, is meekly smouldering (or perhaps was never lit) in relation to women's human rights, which must include access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. And too many governments oppose the participation of NGOs at any realistic level or wish us absent altogether from their power base. However, the final agreed document (and we know how hard our own Charles Ramsden worked on this) at least has the term 'human rights' included and also some good language on the participation of NGOs. There will be more interactive formats and there is (also fought over) a clear link to the Post-2015 Agenda and the SDGs. There is where all our future lies. They will be finally determined in September (25th-27th) at a UN Summit in New York.

It is not too soon to turn our attention now to CSW60, another anniversary. **Please keep the date – June 25th** - when we will celebrate Beijing and its 20- year anniversary, and seek to work out, what next?

Annette Lawson
Chair, NAWO
Co-chair, the UK NGO CSW Alliance



Khatija Barday-Wood, EIMAN, Annette Lawson, NAWO, Lynda Dearlove, Women at the Well UK and Margaret Owen, Widows for Peace through Democracy

Please circulate widely amongst your membership and networks.

Follow us on twitter @Govt_Women for photos and updates as they happen.

