

APPENDIX T

**The 53rd Session of the United Nations Congress on the Status of Women (UNCSW)
The 1st International Anglican Women's Network (IAWN) Conference**

IAWN was held in the Desmond Tutu Centre at the General Theological Seminary in New York, from 22nd to 27th February, 2009. This was the first formal conference of IAWN which is the global voice of Anglican woman in the worldwide church. Its vision is to be a bold and prophetic voice for Anglican women throughout the Communion and in the wider world. Thirty Provinces were represented.

During the 5 days, we looked at the role, funding, issues and priorities of IAWN. Our conclusions listed the top 5 priorities that should be addressed by the church over the next 5 years.

- Violence against women, girls and boys
- Extreme poverty
- Gender equality in the church
- HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB
- Gender budgeting

Our Agreed Resolutions from the conference, and to be presented at the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) meeting in Jamaica, in May, are:

1. That the ACC accepts the IAWN report, commends IAWN for its work, and encourages it to continue to advance women's issues in church and society.
2. That the ACC acknowledges the importance of including women in decision making and requests ACC to encourage the implementation of ACC resolution 13/31 across the Anglican Communion.
3. That the ACC unequivocally supports the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, especially trafficking.
4. That the ACC recognizes the importance of equal allocation of financial resources to fulfill the gospel imperative in our communities and therefore recommends implementing the principles of gender budgeting.

The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) was once again, the largest Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) attending the annual UNCSW, held at the United Nations in New York, from 2nd to 13th March, 2009. Each Province of the Anglican Communion was invited to send a delegate and the majority of them did. These ACC delegates were joined by members of the Anglican Women's Empowerment (AWE) of the USA, making a total of over 100.

The UNCSW advocates for gender equality and advancement of women. Its annual meetings evaluate progress towards those goals, identifies challenges yet to be met, and formulates policies and standards for meeting those goals. Over 5000 NGOs and Government representatives attended the Congress this year.

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The UNCSW priority theme was

The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS.

The Review theme was

Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all Levels.

And the Emerging theme was

Gender perspectives of the financial crisis.

The ACC delegates were under the leadership of Hellen Wangusa, Anglican Observer to the UN and her personal assistant/secretary/deputy, Martha Gardner. The two weeks were very intense, with much reporting, discussing, listening, sharing. Not only were we expected to attend the Plenary Sessions in the UN building but also Parallel Events, hosted by NGOs from all over the world, in the UN and UN Church Center (UNCC) In the evenings and at weekends we had Group meetings with Ms Wangusa in the Episcopal Church Center (ECC).

Plenary Sessions took the format of keynote speakers, followed by country reports from government officials and discussions/questions from the floor. These were informative and interesting. Some of the many whom I listened to were the President of the Economic and Social Committee of the UN, who spoke fervently about implementing the Millennium Development Goals, improving global public health, education, and gender equality; Shahra Razavi of the UN Research Institute for Social Development on the Key Policy Initiatives on the CSW theme; Dr. Lyn Collins, UN population Fund on Gender Perspectives and implementing the MDGs. Ms Dibba, director of the Economic Community of West African States and Gender Development Centre, who spoke about the high poverty rates, inequalities, stigmatization, and the disastrous impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls. The Australian Minister on the Status of Women spoke at length on different aspects of violence against women, while others spoke about the effects of the Global Economic Crisis and its effect on women. We were told how women experience horrific violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, their bodies used as tactics to wage war and to inflict maximum trauma through rape, abduction, abuse, trafficking, sexual slavery and enforced pregnancies. We heard about micro-economics and macro-economics. The General Secretary of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, addressed us and reinforced his commitment to the elimination of violence against women. Forty-six countries had government officials present, including Ireland. Many made statements, but not Ireland as there was no Minister was present.

Parallel Events that I attended included

Equal Sharing of Responsibilities, hosted by The Women's World Peace Federation
Human Rights and Home-based Care, Women in Law and Development in Africa

Refugees, Asia Pacific Women's Watch

Men's Responsibilities and Ending the demand for Sex Trafficking, UNANIMA

Rights of Women living with AIDS, Center for Reproductive Rights

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Vulnerabilities in unpaid work, Urban Justice Center
Shariah Law and Promoting Women's Right, National Council of Canadian Women
Women, HIV/AIDS and Poverty, International Health Awareness Network
Empowering the Girl-Child, ACC
How man can act against violence against women, Human Lactation Center
Equalities in inheritance, Lawyers without Borders
Sharing the Caring, The MU from Mary Sumner House

The Salvation Army, Ecumenical Women, The Bahai International, OXFAM, Human Rights Watch, The Methodists, International Alliance of Women, UNIFEM , Girl Scouts were some of the many NGOs who hosted events.

The ACC delegates began, prior to the CSW, with 2 days of reporting from our Provinces, on the themes, in relation to our Governments and Churches. We heard heartbreaking and encouraging stories, stories about lack of commitment from the Church. We were encouraged by the initiatives taken by women's groups in many countries, - India, Madagascar, Uruquay, Mexico, South Africa, Tanzania, Japan, Scotland, Pakistan and the Philippines. The MU played a significant role in many of these initiatives and many of the delegates were leading members. Later we were divided into Regional groups and given specific topics to cover in depth. Europe, Canada and USA were in one group and our topic was 'HIV/AIDS - immigrants and indigenous groups'.

At the end of the 2 weeks, each of the 5 regional groups wrote a report and all were collated to form a statement that would be issued to the Primates, and to the ACC May meeting in Jamaica. One whole Saturday was spent at a 'Worldcafe' form of discussions, in a church hall. This innovative means of involving each individual resulted in a broad spectrum of opinions which would be used in the ACC recommendations to the UNCSW and ACC. It was evident from all our listening and discussing that gender stereotyping is a major hindrance in moving ahead and needs to be addressed by clear action throughout the world. Work must be done with men and boys as well as women and girls to address harmful societal norms and practices. We were especially concerned about the slow implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), their relation to gender equality and the resulting increased suffering of women and girls that is further exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

We, as an Anglican group, ask churches across our Communion to examine how they can champion the equality of men and boys, and women and girls, particularly with regard to care-giving.

Worship formed an integral part of both conferences. Morning Prayer, midday Eucharist and Evening Prayer, in the beautiful old chapel in the General Theological Seminary, was led by students and lecturers. Each morning of UNCSW, worship was held in the UN Chapel, organized by Christian women from around the world. It was varied but related to the themes of the Congress. All the worship helped us to focus on our themes and inspired, enabled and sustained us through the long days of listening, learning, discussing, advocating and sharing. I

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was honoured to be asked to organize and lead the first morning's worship for the Anglicans. We also had an Opening and Closing Eucharist in the Chapel at the ECC, as well as other daily services there. Our final Eucharist was organized by ACC members, in 8 languages.

The Presiding Bishop of USA, Katharine Jefferts Schori, took time out of her hectic schedule to speak to us as the ACC delegates. She was encouraged by the way some women and men were pushing the boundaries around gender roles in order to be able to offer their gifts and to share the burden and the grace that comes with care-giving.

The Suffragan Bishop of New York Diocese hosted a dinner for the Anglican delegates at which many were thanked and rewarded for their contributions during the year. Martha Gardner, personal assistant to Hellen Wangusa, received a standing ovation for her work in preparing all that was necessary for the ACC delegates to attend, and for her guiding and caring of them, during the 2 weeks of UNCSW.

Throughout both conferences there was a sense of renewed energy, commitment and urgency to the furthering of equality for women, and, for the Anglicans, a renewed sense that the Church should be leading the way in this, rather than lagging behind.

It was a privilege and honour to represent the Church Of Ireland at the IAWN Conference, as our Provincial Link, and also at the 53rd UNCSW, as the ACC delegate from Ireland. I thank Hellen Wangusa for the invitation to attend UNCSW, Kim Krobey, Director of Women's Ministries of the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA), for sponsoring my flight and my accommodation at IAWN. Lastly, I thank the Primate and the Standing Committee for electing, and sponsoring, me at UNCSW, and for having confidence in me to represent our country.

Doris Clements, Tuam, Killala & Achonry