

CSW60

Commission on the
Status of Women

14-24 March 2016

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT | SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Sunday 13th March 2016

For me, the overarching message of the day has been “It becomes stronger if we do it together”, to ensure “no one is left behind”!

Bandana Rana – Woman of Distinction awardee also spoke about the power of collective action. Since 1995 she has been working to make the voices of women in Nepal heard – the tradition had been for the men to talk for their women, thus hiding endemic violence, abuse and disempowerment. She emphasised that we should insist that men and boys change their mind-set and take responsibility for their actions.

I was charmed and delighted by Climbing Poetree, two strong women who, through rap, asked us to examine our reactions to see if they were as a result of unnecessary conditioning. I used their presentation in a Tweet.

The afternoon session I attended proposed a number of possible projects for consideration. The discussion generated brought to the fore a number of ideas and opinions about universal provision of clean drinking water – a human right.



One of the beautiful glass murals within the UN

Wednesday 16th March 2016

Today for the first time, I actually attended meetings in the UN assembly rooms, a truly awesome experience! Just as well the first was a smaller one, because it certainly takes a while to get the feel of actually sitting in the ECOSOC meeting room, with all the paraphernalia attached to major international conferences.

To the matter of the meetings – the first, a briefing – brought us up to date with future conferences planned by UN women and which will continue the theme of fighting violence against women. Incidentally, one contributor suggested that it is high time that we had a woman General Secretary of the UN, so look out for developments in that area!

FGM is certainly violence against girls and the second meeting I attended was discussing this subject. Overwhelmingly, of course, contributors felt that the practice should end – and in the meantime it is still happening worldwide. An emotional contributor made the point “it is happening now, today, here in New York.”

I am finding it fascinating that the two approaches to supporting women into enterprise keep on recurring – top down and bottom up. Of course I am particularly attracted by the Soroptimist way, educating, empowering and enabling.

This afternoon, I went to another briefing, this time at the European Offices, where we learned about the draft report being prepared.

Tonight to a reception hosted by the Irish Ambassador and his wife – tomorrow is St. Patrick's Day – hooray!

Thursday 17th. March.

Today is St Patrick's Day, but although there are many green garments, the focus continues to be on women in enterprise and violence against women.

This morning I went to the NGO briefing (don't ask), which kept me up to date with issues arising pretty close to home. The Guides (who are truly excellent) are very anxious that 'and girls' should be added to 'women' throughout the outcomes document, and they are right, since girls are so much disregarded, even than women.

Thence to a very interesting examination of the extent of, and dealing with trafficking in particular parts of the world. The Government of the Philippines stated the laws and implementation rules they have in place, The chair of the session asked us to consider that beauticians, fruit farmers and fishermen are all probably paid slave wages, which refers back to my blog yesterday, when I asked that we spend money wisely.

Twenty million people are slaves in 2016!

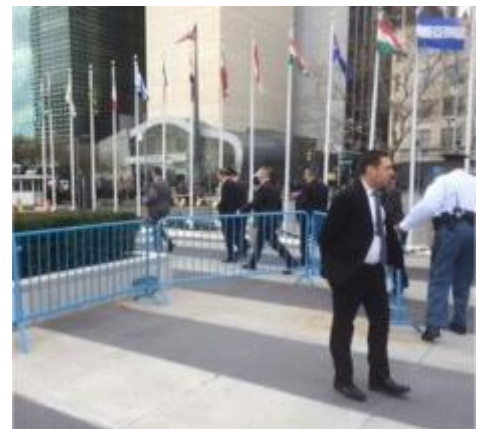
It is believed that human trafficking is THIRD, in the list of most profitable illegitimate sources of income.

As a natural segue from this session, I thought that I would attend a session on corruption, but unfortunately, this did not happen. Thus I found myself at the American/European caucus session, where we voiced our difficulties with some of the wording in the draft document. This to be sent to UN Women.

Friday 18th. March

First thing this morning, I went to the usual briefing. It's an extremely valuable experience, because you get feedback from all the events that you were not personally able to attend.

Trending today, as they say, was discussion about keeping NGOs involved in UN women throughout the year not just at CSW, since those attending seem to feel that UN Women make some recommendations without sufficient information gathering. It is absolutely fascinating to see how diplomacy works in action. There is a vibrant discussion at the moment about changes in language in the draft report from CSW, which it is felt might water down some of the gains from the Beijing platform agreement.



Ban Ki-Moon

So, after this meeting, I went for a guided tour of the UN. Although I have been in and out all week, flashing my pass, this was a regular tour through which we learned a lot of history and background to the UN. It was extremely interesting, and we bought some UN postcards, complete with UN stamps, to send to the grandchildren. The icing on the cake was that while we were on our way out, so was Ban Ki-Moon, and we got a photo of him in the distance.

This afternoon, since as you know, I am interested in the TORL campaign, I went to a discussion about decriminalising sex work. I didn't learn anything that changes my mind - I am still convinced that the best way forward is the Norwegian model, to criminalise the purchase of sex. I believe that will be the best method of getting gangs out of the picture.

Several of our group are going away tomorrow, so I am going out with them for a meal tonight.

Sunday 20th. March

The last two events I attended both concerned lives and problems for women involved, voluntarily or coerced, in the sex trade. Since SIGBI ROI has been quite involved in the TORL campaign, and I knew I was going to the Ruhama event on Saturday, I felt it would be interesting to make comparisons.

The first was a 'conversation' with Sex Workers and the three panellists introduced themselves, women from US, Uganda and Ireland. In fact the Irishwoman, Kate McGrew regularly appears on Irish radio and television. The ladies proposed that overall decriminalisation of the sex trade would be the best solution to ensure that women would have access to health care and the protection of the law if they were subjected to violence. Unfortunately no questions were allowed which disagreed with this position.

This position is different from that of the TORL campaign which supports the Nordic model which would criminalise the purchasers of sex, thus hitting the market and organised crime which benefit.

The CAP International event on Saturday, as I say, included Speakers from France, Ireland, India, Germany and South Africa who described the dreadful lives and difficulties in surviving prostitution.

They also spoke about the efforts to introduce laws based on the Nordic model.

The session ended on a hopeful note with Yves Charpenel, from France, explaining that the law in France will be implemented from 6th. April, 2016.