Zonta International District 22
Advancing the Status of Women Worldwide

United Nations Update – District 22 - September 2011

Information from ZI UN Chairman for July – August

The International Day of Peace, September 21st, is now not very far away. This will be the thirtieth year this has been commemorated. The attached video may be useful for Clubs http://youtu.be/OSr2gBsg9dI

The following is a summary about UN reports and meetings that have occurred during the last couple of months. Please contact me if you would like more details.

CEDAW Committee General Discussion

On July 18th, your UN representatives in New York attended the General Discussion of the CEDAW Committee which was ***centered on the problem of violence against women in conflict and post conflict areas***. As many will recall, Zonta International joined many other NGOs in writing a statement deploring these acts of violence. Most of the points below echo the ideas put forth in ZI's statement to the CEDAW Committee. The CEDAW Committee will consider all statements for the purpose of making a general recommendation. That should occur sometime in 2012.

The following is a summary of the essential points raised:

- Discrimination and violence against women is still rampant.
- While legislation is important, even more important is implementation of the law.
- Women must have representation in post-conflict decisions in order to ensure gender balance.
- Peacekeepers who have committed violence against women have been sent home, but the home country does not always follow through with punishment, a situation that must end. "Name and shame the perpetrators".
- The problem of education for girls. There must be emergency responses so that the lives of children are not disrupted beyond repair.
- Those fleeing conflict areas must have protection for the right of migration.
- Armies must be prevented from engaging girl combatants.
- Prosecution is essential for rape as torture. Reparations for women who have been stigmatized by rape should be part of the peace (post-conflict) process.
- Police departments should recruit more women and perhaps have a woman stationed in police headquarters to deal with women's issues.

UN Women 2011-2012 Report
Progress of the World's Women
In Pursuit of Justice

Mary Ann Tarantula, Zonta International United Nations Committee Chairman said "that it was a great honor to be invited to the launch of the 2011-2012 Report, the first major UN Women report". ***The focus of the report***, which is 164 pages long, ***is justice***. In the foreword to the report, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon writes,

"Justice is central to the effort to help women become equal partners in decision-making and development. Without justice, women are disenfranchised, disempowered and denied their rightful place."

This flagship report from UN's new organization for women recognizes progress, but calls on governments to take urgent action to end the injustices that keep women poorer and less powerful than men in every country in the world.

The entire report is available online at www.progress.unwomen.org. The report is divided into two headings, ***"Making Justice Systems Work for Women"*** and ***"Gender Justice and the Millennium Development Goals."*** Under the second heading, there is a sub-heading ***"Ten Recommendations to Make Justice Systems Work for Women."***

To ensure justice becomes a reality for all women, UN Women calls on governments to:

- **Repeal laws that discriminate against women**, and ensure that legislation protects women from violence and inequality in the home and the workplace.
- **Support innovative justice services**, including one-stop shops, legal aid and specialized courts, such as mobile courts to bring justice to women in remote rural areas, to ensure women can access the justice to which they are entitled.
- **Put women on the frontline of justice delivery**. As police, judges, legislators and activists, women in every region are making a difference and bringing about change.
- **Invest in justice systems that can respond to women's needs**. Donors spend US$4.2 billion annually on aid for justice reform, but only 5% of this spending specifically targets women and girls.

United States Trafficking in Persons Report
June 2011

The United States Department of State prepared a comprehensive 412 page report on Trafficking in Persons. The report places each country in a tier. The tiers are based on the actions of each government and its actions to combat trafficking. The extent of the trafficking problem in each country is considered as well. The tier rankings are not permanent. Every country can do more and must maintain efforts as well as increase them.

Keeping in mind that this is a United States Report, the US government may enact penalties on Tier 3 countries through sanctions. These sanctions may include non-humanitarian, non-trade related foreign assistance. Also, Tier 3 countries (countries that do not comply with the minimum standards and are not making efforts to do so), may face opposition from the United States to assistance from international financial institutions such as the World Bank. Among the countries in Tier 3 are Central African Republic, Iran, Korea (North), Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Zimbabwe.

We are all aware of the problem of human trafficking for the sex trade, but this report covers debt bondage among migrant laborers, involuntary domestic servitude, forced child labor, child soldiers, and child sex trafficking.

Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
On the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Under the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the High Commissioner presented a report on 4 July to the UN General Assembly. The report is meant to follow up on the effectiveness of the Declaration. The report covers the period from May 2010 to April 2011. ***The highlights here are from the***

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The CEDAW Committee expressed concern about:

- The lack of effective access to the justice system for indigenous women and requested State parties to take all appropriate measures to remove impediments that women may face in gaining access to justice and to put in place measures to ensure women's access to justice. It specifically recommended that States parties should enhance women's awareness of their rights through legal literacy programs and legal assistance.

- The lack of access to health care for indigenous women. . Its recommendation was that State parties "…should close the existing gaps in the infant and mortality rates between indigenous and non-indigenous populations."

- The underrepresentation of indigenous women in decision-making positions in both public and political life. The Committee has made recommendations to State parties in the past asking them to adopt temporary special measures to address this.

Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
Human Rights and Transitional Justice

This report, dated 4 July 2011, reports on five segments of human rights and transitional justice. Within the descriptions of each of these sections are the steps taken by the OHCHR in providing a wide range of assistance to relevant countries in achieving transitional justice.

- The first is Truth-seeking Processes which help post-conflict States to investigate past human rights violations.
- The second segment is Prosecution Initiatives which aims to ensure that perpetrators of serious human rights violations are tried and punished.
- The third segment has to do with reparations programs. These programs seek to remedy systemic violations of human rights.
- The fourth segment has to do with Institutional Reform. Public institutions that helped to perpetuate conflict must be changed into institutions that uphold peace and protect human rights. They must also promote a culture of respect for the rule of law.

Zonta International United Nations Committee

The Zonta International United Nations Committee continues to monitor reports and recommendations of the CEDAW Committee as well as the Human Rights Council. Mr. Ivan Simonovic, Assistant Secretary-General, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, has promised to have quarterly briefings with NGOs at the United Nations. His briefings have been very informative and he takes the time to answer all questions. These briefings usually last an unprecedented three hours, which attests to his and the OHCHR's commitment to keeping NGOs informed.

Please contact me if you have any queries about UN matters & also let me know about UN commemorations at your Club so that these can be shared. I look forward to catching up with many of you at the Conference.

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