



CWGL at the 2009 Commission on the Status of Women March 2-13, 2009

CWGL participated in the 53rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) from March 2-13, 2009 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The 2009 priority theme was “the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS.” This year CWGL accredited 85 representatives to the CSW, co-sponsored eight events, co-coordinated two Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) strategy meetings, and helped in the coordination of a UN sponsored strategies for violence against women (VAW) consultation.

In terms of gender equality architecture, the CSW provided a unique opportunity for advocates to come together and build support for strengthening the UN system in its ability to deliver concrete and meaningful results for women around the world. CWGL is a co-facilitator of the GEAR Campaign, and in that capacity co-hosted two strategy meetings with the Campaign Working Group Regional and Global Focal Points including, African's Women Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW), Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), Foundation for Studies and Research on Women (FEIM), International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), South Asian Campaign for Gender Equality (SACGE)/SAATHI, WIDE - Globalising Gender Equality and Social Justice, and Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), along with a number of other organizations in the NY Lobbying Group. The GEAR team lobbied UN missions and promoted the campaign in regional and thematic caucuses.

The Linkage Caucus, which has its roots in organizing at the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing and co-convened by WEDO, met four times during the CSW and spurred advocacy around gender architecture within the UN system. The Caucus launched a petition calling for the creation of a new women's entity at the UN as well as for meaningful civil society participation to be integrated into all stages of its development and functioning.

Please support the GEAR Campaign and sign the [petition](#) to “build a United Nations that really works for all women.”

During the CSW, the Secretary General convened a long awaited meeting on “system wide coherence,” where he introduced a new paper outlining options for the structure and governance of a new women's entity, and endorsed the composite, or hybrid, option as “the most promising.” Since its inception, the GEAR Campaign has been calling for the hybrid option, which would retain the best elements of the four women's organizations of the UN, while significantly increasing funding, strengthening country level and policy-setting work, and creating a position of Under-Secretary General to lead the new body. The CSW adopted [Agreed Conclusions](#) late on the final evening, March 13th, after arduous negotiations. Sexual and reproductive rights advocates hailed new triumphs as well as renewed commitments to implementing key government-agreed documents, such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Cairo Programme of Action. Gender architecture reform advocates were pleased to note two paragraphs (14



& 15h) in the Agreed Conclusions that support the process moving forward and the need to address under resourcing for gender equality in the UN system.

The Secretary General's new campaign on Ending Violence Against Women also provided an organizing platform during the CSW. CWGL co-convened a meeting on the campaign with UNIFEM and the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues, during which NGOs involved in anti-violence campaigning learned about opportunities the campaign provides and also offered constructive ideas for its implementation. At a side event hosted by CWGL, Yakin Erturk, the current Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women noted milestones and challenges in the organizing landscape, and others highlighted creative advocacy and campaigning. Speakers included: Aisha Shaheed, WLUML; Charlotte Bunch, CWGL; S. Vinita, CREA; and Jessica Notwell, World YWCA.

As a steering committee member of the [Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition](#) (WHRDIC), CWGL participated in *Women Human Rights Defenders: Contexts and Challenges* the first week of the CSW. Speakers included women's rights defenders, Charlotte Bunch, CWGL; Marieme Helie-Lucas, WLUML; Sussan Tahmasebi, Campaign for Equality; and Dawn Cavanagh, Coalition of African Lesbians. During the panel presenters expressed the need for international support from the women's movement when women on the ground explicitly call for it and are able to experience safe activism in their local context. Other activists stated how the role of non state actors needs more conceptual thinking in exploration of traditional violations against defenders.

The 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women was celebrated in a panel discussion spearheaded by International Women's Rights Action Watch-Asia Pacific and co-hosted by CWGL. CEDAW Committee members and activists who campaign for local implementation of CEDAW discussed successes and remaining challenges, including resistance to the treaty by states, as well as efforts to make the treaty more inclusive in relation to gender and sexuality.

CWGL's Senior Policy Advisor, Cynthia Rothschild, participated in a panel organized by Human Rights Watch, about the *General Assembly Statement on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Human Rights*. Cynthia explained the historic grounding of women's organizing in the sexual rights movement in an effort to galvanize audience members to incorporate sexual rights into their rights framework. Other presenters spoke specifically about violations that LBT women face and the importance of cross social justice movement building to strengthen sexual rights supports.

2010 will mark the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and CWGL will once again campaign to ensure that women's voices are heard. CWGL has an extensive history working with and supporting women's rights organizations around the world to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. The B+15 Caucus at the 53rd CSW exemplified the women's movement enthusiasm about planning activities around the time of the 54th CSW in 2010. Furthermore, participants in the Caucus suggested the need for the women's movement to organize regionally and coordinate events around the time of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic Commission Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and regional reviews of BPfA. To view CWGL reflections from Beijing anniversaries, visit [B+5](#) and [B+10](#).