9th NGO FORUM ON “ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN - KEY FACTORS FOR EQUALITY BY 2030”

JUNE 2, 2017

Unlike other years, this Forum was not well attended and was not as well organized as usual. There was a last minute room change that was not well communicated, some speakers did not show at all and the schedule needed to be constantly re-adjusted to accommodate missing speakers and moderators.

The reasons for the poor attendance were not clear and there is currently great concern amongst NGOs in Geneva about planned participation at future meetings. There is apparently a move to limit participants without permanent passes to just 15 per meeting. This is an issue that will need to be addressed by the NGOs based in Geneva and I will suggest to Simone Ovart that NGO CSW Geneva take a leading role in this issue.

That said, there were some interesting and excellent speakers. The lack of men in attendance was disappointing given also the important message of the conference on the need of involving men and boys if gender and economic parity are ever to be attained.

I was pleased that 4 members of the AWC Zurich attended this meeting and found the day to be interesting and worthwhile. AWCZ FAWCO rep, Barbara Tengtio wrote an excellent summary which I am attaching.

Given that FAWCO’s Target this year is education; I would just like to add some further points to Barbara’s summary on this one issue.

Manjit Dosanjh, from GWI and one of the top and few women in CERN gave an excellent presentation on the need to educate women with a focused science, technology and innovation policy. This must include life-long learning opportunities for women and girls. In 2013 two thirds of the worlds illiterates were female. We heard over and over about the feminization of poverty and according to UNESCO figures presented by Manjit, one extra year of schooling increases an individual’s earnings by up to 10%, that basic reading skills would cut poverty by 12%, a women’s level of education is reflected in her children’s health, nutrition and education and a child born to a mother who can read is 50% more likely to survive past age 5.

In order to meet SDG 4 on reaching universal primary and secondary education 26 million new teachers are needed by 2030 with Africa facing the greatest challenges.

Particularly in ICT there is a great need for women role models, improved images and perception of women in these fields and strong mentoring. Childcare, flexibility in working hours to allow for care giving and family should not create negative bias in the working place.

Next year will be the 10th anniversary of this economic empowerment forum and OCAPROCE is asking for support in preparing the next Forum.

Paula Daeppen