United Nations Liaison Conference Report

 2013

This has been a very busy year for FAWCO’s UN team with UN Reps in each main UN office making significant contributions on key UN committees to the work on women’s issues raising FAWCO’s profile at the UN to new levels. Here are some of the highlights of the work of the UN Team during 2013.

**New York**

FAWCO’s main UN Representative Erica Higbie had a very busy year attending dozens of meetings at UN headquarters in New York including going to the General Assembly High Level Briefing on the MDG’s and Post 2015, the UNODC Global Report on Trafficking of Persons, a DPI Workshop on UN Communications, a UN Women’s stakeholders’ meeting on the Post 2015 agenda, a briefing by Human Rights Commissioner Navi Pillay as well as many others on UN issues such as food security, macroeconomic polices, efforts to eliminate FGM and World Press Freedom. She

also took an active role on the Steering Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) by becoming Chair of the Advocacy Task Force of the Working Group for Girls. In addition, she attended 24 meetings during the annual worldwide CSW conference in NY March 3-15. She commented about the meetings on a full range of fascinating topics related to women on her blog which can be found on the FAWCO website at <http://www.fawco.org/fawco-the-un/what-we-do/current-initiatives/women-s-rights/csw>.

Erica (AWC Perth and FAUSA) now serves as the head of FAWCO’s Human Rights Task Force and was previously co-chair, along with UN Rep Tonya Teichert (AWC The Taunus) of FAWCO’s Task Force on Ending Violence Against Women and Children. At the suggestion of Therese Hartwell (AWEP), the Task Force led the Women for Women’s “Meet US on the Bridge” initiative at the FAWCO Biennial Conference in Bern and across the FAWCO global Network on International Women’s Day on March 8, 2013 to bring awareness to violence against women in war zones.

**Geneva**

American Ambassador to the UN, Betty King, gave the keynote address at the FAWCO Biennial conference in Bern, Switzerland on March 8, 2013, International Women’s Day, and she also participated with conference goers in the “Meet Me on the Bridge” march in solidarity with “Women for Women” around the world.

During FAWCO’s Biannual Conference in Bern, Switzerland in March, main UN Representative, Sara von Moos (AWC Bern) organized a highly successful visit to the UN HQ in Geneva and also organized meetings with key female officials at the US mission to the UN who are responsible for promoting women’s rights within the various UN agencies.  For the FAWCO UN Team session at the conference, Sara also organized the highly attended “ Women's Sexual & Reproductive Health” presentation about innovative techniques being developed to improve maternal health by WHO women's health expert, Dr. Lisa Thomas.

Geneva UN Reps Stacy Lara and Anne Riz, both from AWC Bern, joined Sara in attending regular UN briefings, monthly CSW Geneva meetings, the 23rd & 24th sessions of the Human Rights Council (June & September), the ECOSOC Substantive Session in July, as well as events organized by UN agencies, country missions, NGOs and human rights organizations. They also joined many other NGOs in the annual White Ribbon rally in Geneva on Nov. 25 to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, organized by the Women’s World Summit Foundation. (WWSF).

At the invitation of UN Ambassador Betty King, FAWCO’s 2013 Friendship Quilt entitled “Time” was displayed at the Palais de Nations from June 27-August 31 along with dozens of others at an exhibition organized by the US Mission in Geneva and sponsored by” Quilt for Change” and “Solar Sister” entitled “Light, Hope, Opportunity: Empowering Women through Clean Energy.” To see an interview with Sara von Moos about the quilt and the exhibition on YouTube go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKgTkkckGrs>

Last fall, NGO CSW Geneva President and General Secretary of the World YWCA, Ms Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, appointed UN Rep Sara von Moos as Task Force Co-Chair of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Beijing +20 Regional Review NGO Forum. The Beijing +20 Task Force will be responsible for overseeing the coordination of this 2-day conference that will be held in Geneva in November 2014.

In 2013, the Geneva UN Team consisted of Sara von Moos, Anne Riz and Kathleen Simon (AWC Bern) and Paula Daeppen (AWC Zurich). In 2014, Stacy Lara, Anne Riz and Enid Burki (AWC Bern) will be working closely with Sara on various committees of the Beijing + 20 Task Force.

**Vienna**

This year, Vienna’s UN Representative Laurie Richardson (AWC Vienna) attended regular meetings of the local CSW committee. In March she organized and moderated a special panel discussion and showing of “Half the Sky” based on the book by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl Wu Dunn on Human Trafficking at the Amerika Haus, co-sponsored with the US Embassy in commemoration of the National Women’s History Month. UN Rep Tonya Teichert (AWC Taunus) co-chair of the Ending Violence against Women and Children Task Force and Joana Reiterer from the anti-trafficking NGO “ EXIT” participated on the panel.

Laurie also attended several meetings on trafficking, Beijing +20 and a local symposium on women’s rights on Nov 25 organized by UN Watch, UNIFEM and the UN CSW.

**Greece**

While Greece does not have a main UN headquarters, FAWCO has had a very active UN

Advocate, Grace Christovasilis (AWC Athens) promoting UN activities for years in Athens. This year, in conjunction with FAWCO’s Ending Violence Task Force, Grace organized a daylong conference against Domestic Violence in May with guest speakers that included the wife of the US Ambassador, the EU spokesperson on equality from Isotita, the founder of a local women’s shelter, and a psychologist from WIN Hellas, a non-profit combating domestic violence in Greece.

**Next Target Program – Human Rights for Women**

After the first highly successful four-year Target Program designed to show FAWCO’s support for the UN MDG’s raised over $165,000, the FAWCO Board announced in March its continued support of the UN MDGs by recommending that a second Target Program be focused on “ Human Rights for Women.”

Earlier in the year, UN Liaison Pam Perraud and UN Rep Sara von Moos both served on the Target Program Task Force that reviewed and evaluated the first Target Program and made suggestions for improvements in the second Target Program.

Vienna UN Rep Laurie Richardson made presentations about the MDGS and the upcoming Target Program at FAWCO regional meetings in Gothenburg, Sweden and Cologne, Germany.

During the fall, UN Reps Erica Higbie and Laurie Richardson both served on the 2013 Target Selection Committee, which reviewed the submissions for the new Target Program and selected the three project finalists, which FAWCO clubs will vote on. The next Target Program project will be announced at the FAWCO conference in March 2014.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Pam Perraud (AAWE Paris, FAUSA)*

*UN Liaison*