

**Presentation by Carolyn Hannan, Director  
United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women**

**At the meeting on "Human Rights for Women Worldwide:  
Update on the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women"**

**Organized by the Buffalo/Niagara Chapter Friends of Women's Rights National Park Inc**



responsibilities between women and men, including caring in the context of HIV/AIDs” will feed into the follow up in the General Assembly on the Action Plan on HIV/AIDS in 2009.

Since the Beijing Conference, the Commission has worked to become an important global forum for Member States to come together to di

outside the official programme. NGOs organize around 150 such parallel events at each annual session. The NGO Committee on the Status of Women organizes a consultation day for NGOs attending the session, the Sunday before the opening of the Commission. This provides an excellent opportunity to get further information on the issues to be considered by the Commission, and to meet NGOs from all around the world. During the Commission the NGO Committee on the Status of Women also organizes daily briefings to keep NGOs abreast of the developments at the Commission.

NGOs in Buffalo have a unique opportunity to be involved in the work of the UN Commission on the Status of Women because of proximity to New York. NGOs must, however, have ECOSOC accreditation to be able to attend. I understand that a number of NGOs already have this status and others are considering applying for this. I would encourage as many NGO representatives as possible to take the opportunity to attend as it provides a unique learning experience, as well as the opportunity to put forward your ideas and influence the global policy making process on gender equality and empowerment of women.

Increasingly, NGOs from different parts of the world are looking for ways to ensure that they get full benefit from the opportunity to participate in the sessions. Organizations begin to prepare for the discussions on the priority theme the year before the Commission. They hold meetings and seminars, collect information and materials, and prepare their own materials on the theme. They come to the Commission well informed and with clear ideas on what changes they want to promote. Many also organize parallel event to put forward their viewpoints on the themes of the Commission or to raise other important issues.

With the increased focus of the Commission on implementation at national level, NGOs are also developing ways to ensure that there is follow up to the policy recommendations after the Commission sessions. For example, a group of about 100 Anglican women from different countries underwent a preparatory programme for the recent session, attending workshops and panels. During the CSW they were provided with further briefings and support as needed to ensure that they could fully benefit from their participation. Following the CSW, efforts will be made to ensure that there is adequate follow up at national level. This input of NGOs to ensure that the Commission has impact at national level is a very important contribution.

NGOs in Buffalo could do the same, for example in relation to the forthcoming 2008 theme of "Financing for gender equality and empowerment of Women" or in relation to the 2009 theme of "Sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caring in the context of HIV/AIDs" – which also promises to be a very exciting topic. Thematic discussions on, for example, the sharing of responsibilities between women and men, and the implications for gender equality and empowerment of women, could be held during 2008 to prepare for participation at the Commission in 2009. In this way, women and men in Buffalo would be engaged in dialogue on the issue, those attending the Commission would be well informed and better able to raise relevant issues. On return from the Commission, the participants could organize further meetings to discuss the outcomes and decide what actions could be taken in Buffalo to implement the recommendations of the Commission. When the Commission comes back to review these recommendations in 2-3 years time, NGOs in Buffalo would be able to report back on progress made.

Allow me to say a few words about the theme of the 2008 session, "Financing for gender equality and empowerment of women". Although the Beijing Platform for Action, and outcomes of other meetings, made commitments on allocation of resources for gender equality and empowerment of women, the Commission has never specifically addressed this issue. As mentioned, it is also important that the Commission is considering the issue now as it can provide recommendations to the preparations for the large and important meeting on Financing for Development to be held in Qatar in 2008. The Expert Group Meeting on this topic, held in September in Oslo, and the reports of the Secretary General which will be made available to participants at the Commission, have focused on a number of key issues related to financing. These include: the links between gender equality and macro economic policies; gender equality and public finance management; resources for gender equality through development assistance; and funds provided through innovative means, such as foundations and the private sector. Focus is given to resource allocations for two particular target groups – the national mechanisms for gender equality and the women's movement.

One critical issue which will be discussed at the Commission is the attention given to resources for gender equality in budgets at national and local levels, what is known as "gender responsive budgets". In more than 70 countries analyses of budgets have been carried out to assess the extent to which the needs, priorities and contributions of women are taken into account in allocating resources. Methodologies are being developed to ensure that it is possible to track the allocation of resources in support of commitments to gender equality. Increased attention is needed to the issue of measurement, since "what is treasured, is measured". If there is no measurement of resource allocations to gender equality, and no accountability for identifying and addressing resource gaps, progress on gender equality and empowerment of women will be limited.

NGOs are heavily involved in this work – advocating for gender NG#tydlityntlege,6(en)4.1litydule lic o1lityrth1.739r

Similarly, the national mechanisms set up by Governments to promote gender equality and empowerment of women also suffer from a lack of resources. Many of these mechanisms have low status, unclear mandates and little political power, compounded by a serious lack of human and financial resources. This constrains their potential to play the essential role in advocating, advising, supporting and monitoring progress in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women.

The situation of these national mechanisms is often similar to the situation of