13 December 2011

Highlights of the fourth Joint NGO Briefing Series on the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

Alessandra Vellucci, Chief of the Press and External Relations Section in the United Nations Information Service in Geneva welcomed participants to the fourth NGO briefing organised by the United Nations Information Service Office in Geneva, the NGO Liaison Unit and the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service. She then introduced the speakers on the topic of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

1. Christine Brautigam
   Executive Secretary of the Commission on the Status of Women, UN Women

Christine Brautigam said it was the first time that there had been a briefing with the NGOs Geneva by UN Women via a videolink from New York and the timing was very good as just the day before the chairperson had convened a briefing and informal consultations to get the agreement of the Member States on the programme of work for the 56th session.

She also gave some background information on the work of the CSW, explaining it was a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). As such the bureau was elected for two years, she said, and at the end of a session convenes to elect its bureau for the next two sessions. Once the bureau was in place it can then guide the entire preparation period of the next session over the year, and put everything in place to make sure it runs well.

“...You understand, like no one else, the daily challenges faced by the most vulnerable. You have the passion and networks to spread our messages far and wide...”
United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
She continued by saying the Commission had a standard method of work where it considers one priority theme per session, plus a review theme based on the conclusions of a previous session. In addition to this it would also take up an emerging issue which was decided upon Inter-sessionally. It would also briefly look at the priority theme of the subsequent year. Additional to this in the programme was a general debate where delegations could make statements on national developments. A high-level round table was also included, where representatives can interact and network.

Looking to 2012, the theme of the 56th session was the empowerment of rural women and their role in hunger eradication, development and current challenges, in which significant involvement of the World Food Programme and Food and Agriculture Organization was expected. An expert group had already been convened in Ghana to look at the topic, she said.

The review theme would be on the implementation of the 2008 CSW conclusions, which had looked at financing for gender equality, which came at a good time as there had just been a fourth high level meeting on aid effectiveness (Busan, Republic of Korea).

Meanwhile the emerging issue under discussion would be engaging young women and men, girls and boys to advance gender equality. In this issues such as gender stereotypes, how they affect equality and what contribution the younger generation can make to overcoming them might be discussed.

Following debate and discussions the Commission would adopt resolutions on 9 March. A preparatory panel for 2013 would then take a first look at the key issues around the elimination of violence against women and girls.

Documents to be used in the 56th Session, including reports from the Secretary-General would be available in mid-January on the UN Women CSW website (http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/)

2. Eleanor Solo of the Civil Society Section-UN Women

Eleanor Solo said the CSW had for years attracted more NGOs than any other functional commission, with more than 1,600 attending last year from over 300 organizations.

On this point NGOs accredited to ECOSOC and in good standing were welcome to send representatives to the CSW, she said, though the limitations of the building in which it was held meant that delegations were limited to 20 per NGO. She also outlined that alongside the regular events there were over 200 parallel events that would take place over the two week session.

The ways for NGOs to participate in discussions and meeting were three-fold, she explained. The first of these was to submit written statements, which historically had mostly been on the priority theme, she said, though the deadline for doing this for the 2012 discussions had now passed. Second, there were limited possibilities to make oral statements to the debate, and it was encouraged for NGOs to sign up as caucuses or groups to do this as there were very few speaking slots. Finally the interactive panels, which actually don’t allow pre-prepared statements, were an opportunity for groups to respond and react to a state’s comments on a particular theme. Signing up to speak at a debate or take part in a panel was done through the website, she said.
Ms. Solo also explained that lobbying during the session had become more challenging due to the relocation of the event to the North Lawn building, but had still previously been successful in impacting on the committee’s agreed conclusions.

3. **Astrid Stuckenberger of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO), Geneva**

Astrid Stuckenberger gave a presentation on the various events, both in New York and Geneva (see attachment) that would mark the 56th CSW. She also asked for suggestions from NGOs for speakers during the rural women speakout and conversation circle sessions.

4. **Ricardo Espinosa, Chief, Relations with NGOs and Civil Society at United Nations Office at Geneva**

Ricardo Espinosa added that a new publication on working with ECOSOC had just been published and some hard copies were available from his office or could be accessed online (http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/7CD0DC9D9769CF8C1257959004EB65F/$file/Brochure%20E.pdf)
Questions

Had the deadline for parallel event registrations passed?

Yes. Details on obtaining the additional accreditation for those attending the official parallel events would soon be available.

Was there any funding available to send NGO-nominated speakers to the event?

Very limited funding for travel was available, though the nomination process had already closed and decisions on attendees was to be made this week. However, opportunities still exist for women to take part virtually in conversation circles, the women speak-out sessions and the consultation day.

What was the feeling in New York towards people travelling to the United States for such a conference after recent protests and an upcoming election?

There had been concern on the part of some NGOs that they are not getting enough funding to send people, and every organization had to make decisions on their priorities. And how protest movements recently make an impact would have to be seen in time. However, we have seen governments assisting some representatives attending and this shows the importance of civil society as a strong part of pushing the gender equality envelope.

What materials are available to help get visas?

Getting United States visas remains difficult, so please apply in good time. Following your online registration a letter of confirmation of pre-registration can be downloaded which can be taken to embassies to confirm attendance for the purpose of visa application. However it was not possible for UN Women to get involved in cases where people are turned down.

Under what criterion are the priority, review and emerging themes chosen?

The priority issue for discussion comes from the CSW multi-year programme of work which covers 2010 to 2014 and was negotiated in 2009. This framework enables the commission to have a predictable schedule and to prepare for its meetings accordingly. The review theme was a follow up on a priority theme from previous meetings, so the 2012 review theme was the priority theme in 2008. The emerging issue was used as opportunity to pick up on burning issues either in or outside UN and was selected inter-sessionally. The 2012 emerging issue, for example, was selected as over this year we have seen much evidence of the pressures of world upon young people, the new ways they interact and present their opinions and how that can shape views of important issues.

Would the CSW be online for those that can‘t attend?

Yes. A live webcast of discussions and copies of documents would be available through the CSW website (insert link here)
JOINT NGO BRIEFING SERIES

The Fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

Tuesday, 13 December 2011, from 3:15pm to 4:15pm
Room III, Palais des Nations, Geneva

3:15  Welcome by Alessandra Vellucci, Chief, Press and External Relations Section, United Nations Information Service in Geneva

3:20  Presentation by Christine Brautigam, Executive Secretary of the Committee on the Status of Women, UN Women (video-link)

3:35  Presentation by Eleanor Solo of the Civil Society Section-UN Women, with responsibility for NGO participation in the CSW (video-link)

3:45  Presentation by a representative of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO), Geneva

3:55  Questions and responses

4:15  Close
**JOINT NGO BRIEFING SERIES**

**What to remember?**
**Synthetic table: Important events, dates and venues for NGOS**

By Abdir Dukolberger
Vice-President of the NGO CSW Geneva
Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO), Geneva

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**56th session of CSW, United Nations, New York**
**27 February to 9 March 2012**
For further NGO information, updates and registrations on CSW 56 see http://www.ngocsw.org

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>When?</th>
<th>Where?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NGO Consultation Day</strong> (see draft programme enclosed)</td>
<td>Sunday, 26 February 9:00 am to 5:15 pm</td>
<td>Salvation Army 120 West 14th Street, New York 80 US$ Registration online deadline 13.1.12</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NGO Parallel Events</strong></td>
<td>Monday 27 February to 9 March Schedule: 8:30-10am / 10:30am-12pm/ 12:30-2pm/ 2:30-4pm / 4:30-6pm/ 6:15-7:45pm</td>
<td>3 sites: United Nations NY Church Center (opposite UN) Salvation Army (120 West 14th)</td>
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<td><strong>NGO orientation briefing with bureau members</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, 28 February 8h45 to 10am</td>
<td>Church Center 2nd Floor</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Daily Morning briefing</strong></td>
<td>8h45 to 10am</td>
<td>Church Center 2nd Floor</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NGO Reception</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, 28 February 6-8pm</td>
<td>Turkish Center - 821 United Nations Plaza 46th Street, 6th Floor, New York 40 US$ Registration online deadline 13.1.12</td>
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<td>You are invited to wear your national dress</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>&quot;Conversation Circles&quot;</strong></td>
<td>27 February to 9 March date + time (tbc – see website)</td>
<td>Venue to be confirmed (see website)</td>
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<td><strong>NGO CSW Geneva</strong></td>
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<td>will facilitate 3 CC - Human Rights - Health - Intergenerational dialogue and leadership</td>
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<td>Venue to be confirmed (see website)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rural women &quot;speak out&quot;</strong> Important event 35-70 up 100**</td>
<td></td>
<td>Venue to be confirmed (see website)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NGO Artisan Fair</strong></td>
<td>Friday, 2 March 2012 3 to 7 pm The public is invited to visit the NGO Artisan Fair free of charge, 100% of the proceeds go directly to the artisans.</td>
<td>Church Center 2nd Floor</td>
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<td>Artisans can register to sell their goods which help support worthy causes. Limited space.</td>
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NGO CONSULTATION DAY
Sunday 26 February 2012
Registration required on the website -- space limited (80 US$)

Sunday, 26 February 2012
CONSULTATION DAY

Salvation Army
120 West 14th Street
New York, NY

DRAFT PROGRAM

9 – 9:30 am      Opening Cultural event
9:30 – 9:45 am   Welcome by Soon-Young Yoon, Chair, NGO/CSW/NY
9:45 – 10:15 am  Message from UN Women – Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director, UN Women (invited)
10:15 – 10:45 am Keynote address– Woman of Distinction Awardee
10:45 – 11:15 am Buzz time
11:30 – 12:30 pm Regional Perspectives Panel – Moderated by Chair, NGO/CSW/Vienna
12:30 – 1:45 pm  Lunch
2:00 – 2:30 pm   Special Guest address, Tawakul Karman, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (invited)
2:30 – 3:30 pm   Rural Women Panel – Moderated by Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, Chair, NGO/CSW Geneva
3:30 – 4:45 pm   Afternoon sessions
1. Orientation for new participants to the CSW
2. Advocacy training (1 for youth/girls, 1 for others)
3. Training for Rural Women Leaders Speak-out*
4:45 – 5:15 pm   Closing. Theme song – “Keep on Movin’ Forward”