



Government  
Equalities Office

## Newsletter

United Nations Commission on the  
Status of Women - 61st Session

***From Helene Reardon-Bond OBE, Head of UK Women's National Machinery***

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## Introduction

Welcome to our CSW Newsletter. We hope this edition will provide you with interesting and useful information about the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61), which will take place at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York from 13 to 24 March 2016.

Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from all around the world will attend CSW61, in what is the second largest gathering at the UN after the General Assembly. For us in Government, CSW is a collaboration of teams from the Government Equalities Office (GEO), who leads on CSW for the UK Government, the Foreign Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DFID). We come together to prepare a programme for UK Ministers, negotiate the session's outcome documents and ensure that CSW continues to be an important driver of gender equality internationally.

The priority theme will be "**Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work**" and we will be negotiating agreed conclusions on this subject.

The review theme will be "**Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls**".

This year there will also be an emerging issue "**The empowerment of indigenous women**", which will be the focus of some Ministerial discussions.

## UK delegation

We expect the UK to be well represented at CSW with delegates from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. As well as a large contingency of NGOs/ civil society, we hope there will be a strong ministerial presence. We anticipate that UK government ministers will attend and play a strong and visible role, as they have done in recent years. The Ministers will be attending during the ministerial segment, which takes place between Monday 13 March and Wednesday 15 March.

We are also planning for attendance by members of the Women and Equalities Select Committee, a delegation of parliamentarians sponsored by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, as well as a Commissioner from the Equality and Human Rights Commission and representatives from overseas territories.

Officials from GEO and DFID will attend and work closely with colleagues at the UK Mission to the UN to support a strong UK presence in New York.

## Programme

We're still working on the UK programme, but we think we'll have an event on the 15<sup>th</sup> with Denmark on social norms and another UK side event on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Our Secretary of State Justine Greening, is planning to be present at the launch of the second report of the UN Secretary General High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment.

We'll be running a programme of NGO and parliamentarian briefings every evening during the first week - at the UK Mission at 6pm. We will have a reception in place of one of these in the first few days at the UK Mission or Consulate. More information on UK events and activity will follow in the next newsletter.

## UK preparation and civil society priorities

The Government held its pre CSW engagement event in November. Both the ministers for women participated, as well as the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, the Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, David Isaac, Guirlguiding UK CEO, Julie Bentley, and Women for Women Director, Brita Fernandez Schmidt, among others.

The event was well attended, with more than one hundred people taking part from across the UK. It was very useful for us to have an early conversation with women and organisations which represent women's views on their priorities for CSW60, as well as other key issues around equalities.

We are holding regular meetings with the UK CSW Alliance, which helps to support the coordination of NGOs and liaises with us directly. From those and other discussions, the following issues have been identified as priorities for global leaders around the priority theme. The Government will consider these when negotiating the outcome documents of CSW (please see below).

- I. Ending discrimination and strengthening legal protections. This includes improving the legislative and policy framework to: prevent pregnancy and maternity discrimination; provide for adequate parental leave and pay, as well as flexible working; ensure access to justice for women subjected to discrimination; and address sexual harassment, violence against women and commercial sexual exploitation.

Governments are also urged to implement the provisions of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, the 2030 Development Agenda and the UN High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment.

- II. Increasing focus on education and training and ensuring access to continuing and life-long education and training. In order to ensure sustained global economic growth, women must be equipped with the necessary skills to become entrepreneurs and pursue careers in a wide range of industries, including those where they are traditionally under-represented.
- III. Addressing issues related to the care economy, including ensuring the availability of high quality and affordable childcare and adult social care; developing policies promoting shared responsibilities within the family; and carrying out appropriate research and analysis to support comprehensive responses.
- IV. Closing the gender pay and pension gap, by tackling occupational segregation, supporting living wage commitments, improving access to high-quality childcare and adult social care, eliminating gender stereotypes which affect women and girls' career choices, and ending sexual harassment and violence against women in the workplace.
- V. Taking action to ensure women are not pushed to financial hardship and uncertainty by unsecure employment contracts linked to the 'gig economy'.
- VI. Building institutions and institutional mechanisms that promote gender equality by taking positive action but also mainstreaming equalities in their work, conducting relevant impact analyses. Addressing structural problems and taking a macro-economic view of gender inequalities should be part of these actions.
- VII. Ensuring women are at the heart of economic and political decision-making.

## Negotiations on CSW Agreed Conclusions

The primary outcome document of CSW are the sessions' Agreed Conclusions, which are reached by consensus among all UN Member States. They are a set of recommendations for governments, civil society, international organisations and the private sector on actions they should take to achieve gender equality. They are

focused specifically on each year's priority theme. You can see how these look by reading last year's Agreed Conclusions [here](#) .

The UK negotiates as part of the EU group. We have been feeding into and influencing the EU position, at this stage with written comments and suggestions. We will begin meetings in Brussels and New York (known as coordination) nearer the start of CSW61, at which we'll agree the details of the EU position.

## Events

You can find details of the plenary sessions [here](#) and the side events at the UN building [here](#), when these are made public.

## Communications and getting involved

We hope you find this newsletter useful. We'll publish another before CSW begins which will include information on our communications activity and latest developments. Once it is underway, we will publish regular updates on the programme and negotiations.

If you represent a civil society organisation and you plan to attend CSW61, please urgently let us know by registering [here](#) ( <https://ukngocsw61.eventbrite.co.uk> ). We will use this list to communicate with all of you who will be in New York.

For those of you who want to get involved, we would encourage you to make contact with CSW Alliance by sending an email to [csw-alliance@nawo.org.uk](mailto:csw-alliance@nawo.org.uk) .

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