



# Home Office

Government Equalities Office

Lynne Featherstone MP  
MINISTER FOR EQUALITIES  
2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF  
[www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

Evelyn Fraser  
Development Manager  
Scottish Women's Convention  
6th Floor, Blythswood House  
200 West Regent Street  
Glasgow, G2 4DQ

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Dear Evelyn,

I am writing to thank you for attending the post UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meeting with other UK NGO representatives on 10 May.

Unfortunately, I was unable to stay for the duration of the meeting because of Parliamentary business, but my officials have given me a full report of the issues discussed following my departure.

Thank you for sharing with me the views of members of your organisation and the wider UK CSW56 Liaison Steering Group following participation at this year's meeting and your thinking ahead to the 57<sup>th</sup> Session.

We fully recognise the concerns of your members and other UK NGOs following this year's CSW, and share your disappointment at the lack of an outcome document. I want to reassure you that following this year's meeting, the outcomes have been shared across Government including within the Devolved Administrations. I have

also met and continue to meet regularly with my counterparts in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development to discuss the potential impact of this year's outcomes on advancing gender equality globally amongst other key issues.

Clearly I am keen to avoid a similarly unproductive outcome to the next CSW meeting. As the UK Ministerial Champion for tackling violence against women and girls overseas, I am working with other government departments to undertake a programme of advance lobbying of other governments ahead of next year's meeting. During the meeting I shared with you my core messages on eliminating violence against women and girls and advancing gender equality and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. These messages are used widely in all my international engagement and also by other government ministers. I hope that you will consider reinforcing our common objective to advance gender equality by reiterating these messages in your own international engagement.

Regarding your concerns about the empowerment of rural women in developed countries, I would like to again reassure you that this issue is a priority for this Government. We have undertaken an extensive programme of work in the UK, for example, we have committed £2 million over two years to the Women's Enterprise in Rural Areas Scheme to support the wider growth agenda.

We discussed the need to raise the profile of CSW across Government and more widely. I listened to your views and have asked my officials to explore how we can do this more effectively.

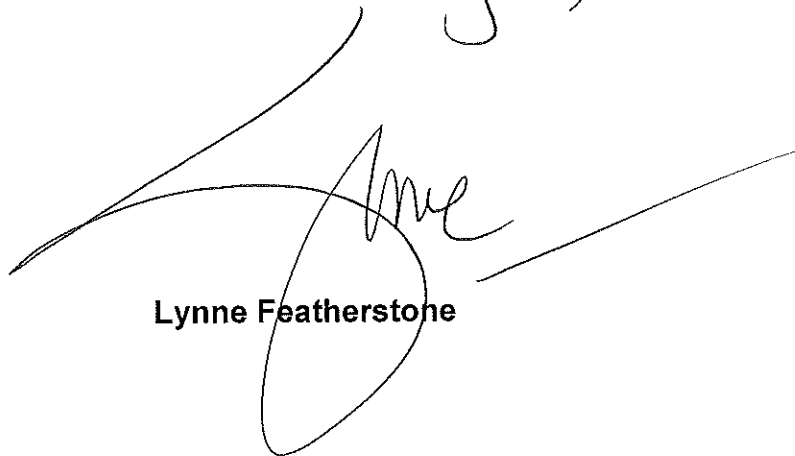
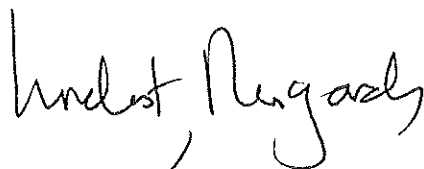
I also noted your proposal that the UK Government support a Resolution on Afghan Women. As a general rule our policy is to sponsor Resolutions which can have the widest possible impact. We are concerned about the risk of focusing on one group of women to the detriment of women in other countries. That said, if another State were to sponsor such a Resolution we would consider the content and whether the UK should support it.

Finally, you discussed with my officials how we can continue working together in the build-up to CSW57 and beyond. Following the 'Strengthening Women's Voices' consultation I have given a strong commitment to engage directly with a wide spectrum of women and organisations representing women, and I particularly want to reach out to those who have not traditionally had a seat at the table. These roundtable discussions are an important expression of that commitment, as is the women's engagement newsletter. We will continue to work to widen and deepen opportunities to bring women's voices into government and, although I will never be able to meet directly with all our stakeholders (much as I would like to), I will ensure that we optimise the impact and influence of women's views on strategic priorities.

Clearly, CSW57 is one of our priorities, and I intend to hold a pre-CSW57 UK NGO engagement event in the autumn. My officials will be in touch with you in the coming weeks to discuss how we can work together to make this event, and our partnership, as effective as possible.

Lastly, I would like to thank you and your colleagues for your participation in the CSW process this year and I have asked my officials to build upon the good practice from CSW56.

I am copying this letter to all those that took part in the NGO CSW56 Liaison Steering Group so that they are kept informed of our discussions and the outcomes.



**Lynne Featherstone**