

Celebrating the Conference on the Status of Women, 24 February 2011

GAPW celebrated CSW 55 by hosting a networking reception with our partners Soka Gakkai International (SGI) and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)/PeaceWomen for the second consecutive year.

This year the reception was very well attended with CSW participants from around the world coming to the GAPW office. The reception entitled "*Voices of Activism: An Informal Networking Reception to Discuss the Women, Peace & Security Agenda with Women Leaders in the Movement,*" was aimed at stimulating dialogue on youth leadership by bringing together leading women's rights activists, policymakers, youth and women's groups. Bearing in mind the theme, the discussion focused on the importance of young women's leadership and the need for participation in women, peace, security and disarmament issues.

Emily Ayoma from SGI introduced the organizers and warmly welcomed everyone to the reception. Jenneth Macan Markar from GAPW gave a brief introduction to the GAPW Women Peace and Security Program. She stressed the need for there to be more women to become actively involved in all aspects of human security and peacebuilding efforts. Jenneth then introduced the first speaker - Ms. Gillian Kitley who is a Senior Officer within the Office of Francis Deng, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide at the United Nations. Gillian spoke about her work and the importance of NGOs to help carry out the civilian protection mandate of the United Nations. She stressed that we need to work together to have the best possible results. She explained that the United Nations needs to expand its reach and can do so with the assistance of civil society organizations on the ground. The younger women at the reception appreciated her insight and advice on how the UN system functions and how they would be able to contribute to its work. Maria Butler from PeaceWomen/WILPF introduced the second speaker Felicity Hill, a women's rights activist and former vice-president of WILPF. Felicity spoke about the importance of women in every age group working to promote peace and security and the need to do it, not always through harsh criticism, but with a sense of humor. She spoke about her work in nuclear disarmament and the damage caused by nuclear waste. Felicity stated that the toxicity of the waste can last for up to 250,000 years. She spoke about the progress

made by women in disarmament affairs – but said there is still a long road ahead. Upon conclusion of the speeches, a lively question and answer session followed with many participants staying on until later in the evening to continue the conversation.

GAPW, along with Femmes Africa Solidarité and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, analyzed the priority theme of the 55th Session of the CSW “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century” and submitted a written statement. Our statement, which strongly emphasizes that the inclusion and participation of women and girls in all aspects of communal life, including education and training as being vital to the creation and maintenance of peace, was distributed at the reception.