

Rebuilding the Global Economy Towards Sustainable and Gender Equitable Development February 23, 2011

On Wednesday, February 23, 2011, UNDP hosted a panel discussion in Conference Room B of the United Nations Headquarters, New York. Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, under-Secretary of the UNDP, acted as moderator to four speakers, H.E. Carsten Staur (Denmark), H.E. Bathabile Dlamini, Dr. Mariana Williams (Jamaica), and Dr. Stephanie Seguino (United States), to discuss the rebuilding of sustainable and gender equitable development in the global economy.

Ms. Grynspan (UNDP) outlined three points, which reflected positive change towards women's empowerment in the global economy: (1) The establishment of UN Women showed that the international community has begun to recognize gender equality; (2) There is noticeable growth in education, as countries have realized the importance of ensuring that women and the girl child are enrolled in educational programs; (3) Women are playing more enhanced roles in the government and social level. Despite these changes, Grynspan noted that progress has not occurred everywhere and provided two distinct scenarios, which demonstrated the continuing gap. While 56% of Rwandan women actively participate in the political process and hold Parliamentary positions, in Papua New Guinea only 2-3% of women achieved the same movements. In this respect, Ms. Grynspan acknowledged it was necessary for the international community meet the millennium development goals, which were set in Beijing and opened the floor to South African Minister Dlamini.

Bringing an interesting viewpoint to the table and sharing South African experiences, Dlamini's statement centered on the importance of mitigation and adaptation policies in relation to climate change. Dlamini urged that there needs to be inclusive and workable solutions at the global and local level because climate change continues to be a global phenomenon which negatively impacts women and the girl child. She also pointed to floods in Brazil and South Africa, which are recurring natural disasters. She explained that women are affected because they are excluded from skills related educational opportunities. In fact, since the girl child is required to take care of the family, climate disasters affect children that would attend schools or who would learn how to survive during natural disasters. Conclusively, Dlamini declared women as the most important aspect of sustainable development.

Focusing on the economic crisis, H.E. Carsten Staur proclaimed that there has been a prolonged food, economic, and energy crisis, where heavy burdens have remained on women. He explained that women have been greatly affected by cut-downs in employment, especially because women often have low-wage labor jobs. Recognizing that investing in women has proven successful, Staur declared there must be greater investment and development in the areas of modern sanitation, health services, as well as areas economic in nature. He concluded by demanding the international community adopt a framework taking into account gender equality and hearing women's voices.

Following Carsten, Dr. Mariana Williams took a slightly different position and focused on the work "rebuilding." Dr. Williams provided that it was not enough to merely "rebuild" or "redevelop" the old system, but insinuated that it could be necessary to reframe the issue.

Carsten expressed that the international community needs to focus specifically on the business community and outlined three broad categories of change: (1) preliminary premises recognizing the crises at hand; (2) the macro level and women's inclusion on discussions surrounding trade and climate change; and lastly (3) expenditures. Williams' continued that business employment and the business economy are the two areas that are necessary for women's development. Ultimately, she asked listeners to acknowledge the fact that there are various economic frameworks and methods to run the economy, all of which should include women.

As the meeting concluded, Dr. Stephanie Seguino proclaimed that rebuilding the global economy depended on four basic principles: 1) full employment, 2) gender, class, and ethnic equality, 3) peace and security, and 4) a green stable economy. To achieve these principles Seguino provided that it is first necessary to increase women's income. Seguino further provided that installing mechanisms to control inflation measures was just as important, as women were the most likely to lose their jobs and be negatively affected from inflation targeting. Seguino concluded by echoing her co-panelists and recognizing that women's access is key to rebuilding the global economy towards sustainable and gender equitable development.

Parity, Peace, and Security in Senegal February 23, 2011

On February 23 in Conference Room 6 of the North Lawn Building, Senegal's permanent mission to the United Nations hosted a panel discussion on Parity, Peace, and Security. The main theme of the dialogue was the Senegalese Bill on Parity and how the world can use that structure as a guide to achieving gender parity. The panel included the President of the Senegalese council of women, Generals who have on-the-ground experience with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 as well as the Senegalese Law, and a representative from Italy describing her country's progress in the fight for gender equality.

Fatou Kiné Diop, President of the Senegalese council of women, initiated the event by explaining the exact makeup of the Bill institutionalizing absolute parity between men and women. Passed May 2010, this bill ensures that all elections include a list of candidates that is equally composed of men and women and, most importantly, a permanent voice for women in decision making institutions. Ms. Diop went on to state the necessity of strengthening the participation and role of NGOs and other organizations in order to help achieve the sought after results of UNSCR 1325. Furthermore, she mentioned Senegal's desire to spread this Parity Law both regionally and abroad, as a tool for achieving these results. Ms. Diop cited the need for more women in mediation as well as better mediation for women. The President of COSEF ended her speech by stating the progress that has already been made. In 1911, there existed only two countries where women can vote, today that is almost universal. Celebrating the 100th year of International Women's Day, Ms. Diop recognized that progress has been made however women refuse to wait another hundred to see the changes that have been implemented in her own country reach international status.

General Kanchi, a General from the Central African region, spoke about his experiences with UNSCR 1325 on the ground. He stated four pressing needs that undermine the effectiveness of the Security Council Resolution. A pressing need for full integration of women on the ground, a

prevention and management resolution, a need for more “manpower” on the ground (the amount of people on the ground to protect citizens, especially women and children, in high conflict areas is not nearly enough), and food security as well as clean air and shelter. He recommended that decision makers come up with a better strategy to correct deficits in what is happening on the ground in order to make UNSCR 1325 successful.

The Italian representative shared her country’s National Resolution and how that provided positive contributions to implementing UNSCR 1325. She explained that this success was achieved through maintaining a gender perspective in all peacekeeping operations, strengthening protection of human rights in conflict areas by better training, and political empowerment of women up so they can be heard. The Italian representative went on to state that real protection of women is not possible without their participation in peacekeeping and decision making. The event ended with an open discussion where the audience was able to comment on the statements and ask any related questions.

Global Action welcomes Senegal’s inventiveness in regards to gender equality, in particular its Bill of Parity. We recognize their tireless work in attempting to spread the very same principles regionally and all over the world. GAPW also recognizes the importance of on-the-ground personnel providing feedback to decision makers, so they may provide the correct personnel to satisfy the most urgent needs of people. Lastly, Global Action embraces Ms. Diop’s statement about strengthening the participation and role of NGOs and other organizations in order to help achieve the sought after results of UNSCR 1325.

Women and girls in situations of armed conflict in the Asia Pacific Region February 25

On February 25 at the Salvation Army, Asia Pacific Women’s Watch held a panel discussion regarding women and girls in situations of armed conflict in the Asia Pacific Region. The Panel was compromised of Ms. Anjana Shakya, Ms. Naw Htoo Paw, Ms. Maksuda Aitieva, and Ms. Chinara Kartanbaeva. They held an open discussion after their individual statements on the issue-at-hand.

Ms. Shakya, the Chairperson/founder of Himalayan Human Rights Monitor, briefed the audience on the post conflict situation of women and girls in the armed conflict in Nepal. She categorized the amount of post-conflict sexual violence as the greatest issue. Ms. Shakya mentioned the high number of women who become prostitutes in order to feed their families after being displaced and an even greater number who are not accepted back into the community. The second greatest issue is that of disappearing women. She discussed the high number of families who are unaware of what happens to their loved ones.

Ms. Paw, from the Karen Women Organization, gave a statement on the situation of ethnic women and girls in conflict areas of Burma. Among other points, Ms. Paw urged the international world to lobby their government/policymakers to support what the Karen Women Organization is working towards. She also informed the audience of the corruption occurring in the Burmese elections.

Ms. Aitieva and Ms. Kartanbaeva gave statements on women in peace building in the situation of Kyrgyzstan from two different personal perspectives. Ms. Aitieva reiterated the role the media plays in spreading the message about the violence and crimes committed against women. She stated that journalists and TV networks simply ignore the violence against women and children. Due to this, the government is easily able to cover up the violence and deny it all together. Furthermore, good journalists have to find “a needle in a haystack,” as Ms. Aitieva put it, in order to report the truth. Ms. Aitieva urged UN Women to investigate on this issue further, as the women in the area are in desperate need of help.

Ms. Kartanbaeva backed Ms. Aitieva’s statement adding that the challenge to documenting the conflict lies in the lack of resources (manpower and monetary) and lack of compliance from the victims and their families. Ms. Kartanbaeva concluded her statement naming the current feminine security groups and activists that exist in her country, adding that this number is far too small.

Global Action supports the reference made by the panelists as to the importance of implementing and working towards UN Security Council Resolution 1325. We support Ms. Aitieva’s call for UN women and the international community as a whole to recognize the corruption and injustice towards women occurring in numerous regions around the world. Getting women and their families to publicize the issues in their respective communities is a necessity.

Women’s participation in peace-building and conflict prevention February 25

On February 25 hosted by the European Union delegation to the United Nations, a panel discussion facilitating women’s participation in peace-building and conflict prevention was held. This discussion gave women-activists and leaders from Central Asia, South Asia, and Southern Caucasus the opportunity to share their personal as well as recommendations for the betterment of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Mr. Peter Schwaiger, Deputy Head of the European Union delegation to the UN opened the event with a brief statement reiterating the EU’s support for women to be decision makers in the area of conflict and development, both before and during conflict. The discussion was moderated by Ms. Anne Marie Goetz, Senior Advisor, Governance, Peace and Security Section, UN Women, New York. Ms. Damira Sartbaeva from UN Women, Ms. Julia Kharashvili from IDP Women Association “Consent” Georgia, Ms. Rafika Musaeva from the office of the President of Tajikistan, and Ms Mira Karybaeva from the Office of the President of Kyrgyzstan were on the panel.

The panel was split linguistically, with some members speaking English while others spoke Russian. It was discussed that peacekeeping is a long-term process and that UN women (UNW) has great potential with exceptional women already in place throughout the world for aiding the successful implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 came through.

Ms. Mira Karybaeva concluded the panel discussion with a statement about what women really need to do and how. Although she mentioned four crucial points which affect her native land of Kyrgyzstan, Ms. Karybaeva assured the panel similar or perhaps the very same issues affect the surrounding areas. The Kyrgyzstani activist stated that the biggest issue affecting her people was

a lack of security. As a result, the citizens arm themselves as much as they can, because they do not trust the government to provide adequate protection. She felt as though women could play a crucial role in convincing citizens that armament does not equate to more peace. Second is the corruptness of the police forces in Kyrgyzstan and the fact that perhaps women can play a greater role in reaching out to their fathers, brothers, and children to start an honest reformation. Ms. Karybaeva mentioned the young criminals in her native land and the damage they are causing, primarily in the poor dormitory areas, as the third and fourth crucial issues. To these points, Ms. Karybaeva stressed the importance of getting women to work in these uncomfortable situations, because that is where the greatest problems are.

Global Action recognizes the important role of women in peacekeeping before, during, and after conflicts. Furthermore, women are a necessity not just in the government sector, but on the ground in police forces and various other positions. GAPW welcomes the positive steps taken in accordance to UNSCR 1325 and the many great examples throughout the world of this Resolution playing an intricate role, however much is still to be done to achieve the ideal results. Global Action also recognizes the idea that women can play make significant contributions in convincing citizens of the world that more arms do not equate to more peace.

Protection and Restitution for Survivors of Sexual and Gender Based Violence February 24, 2011

On February 24, 2011, at 10:00am, the Association for Cooperative Operations Research and Development (ACORD) hosted a panel discussion as part of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) titled “Protection and Restitution for Survivors of Sexual and Gender Based Violence” held at the Church Center of UN Plaza. Speakers from ACORD gave an overview of their recent study of the effectiveness of legal frameworks in place in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and the Democratic Representative of Congo to respond to acts of sexual and gender based violence. The study aimed to develop a model compliance policy guide that will inform engagement by civil society and governments.

The speakers articulated their findings to suggest that laws and institutions responsible for response to sexual violence do not provide survivors with adequate guarantees of reparations and pledge of non-violence. One moving example cited was the case of a father who sought justice for the rape of his eight-year-old daughter, only to be threatened, attacked, and eventually forced to sell a part of his land to pay for his daughter’s extensive medical care. While specific laws are in existence in the countries studied, in many areas the laws prove to be symbolic, not substantive. Even when there are responses to sexual violence, the speakers expressed consequences of a collective identity based culture, where in many communities; the perpetrator individual act is absorbed into collective guilt from the clan. This collective based punishment does not give adequate attention to the individual suffering of the victim, especially in terms of reparations. The speakers were firm in their belief that a patriarchal based culture is the source of many girls’ discouragement in speaking for themselves as a victim of violence, and this impedes proper criminal proceedings. To ameliorate such challenges, the ACORD speakers underscored the need for proper collaboration between policing agencies, greater access for victims to information of avenues for protection, and finally, more robust institutional mechanisms that provide adequate social services and protection to both the victim and the affected family.

Global Action to Prevent War believes these issues are central to the development of women, peace, and security. Shifting jurisprudence from a male dominated structure, to a framework that properly accounts for a female perspective is greatly needed and aligns with our commitment to UN Resolution 1325 and 1820. Additionally, Global Action recognizes the need for increased flow of information, especially in the institutional shortfalls in civil society with the response of sexual and gender violence. We commend ACORD in their comprehensive study and are hopeful in the implementation of their recommendations at the national and local level.

Trafficking, Prostitution and Work February 24, 2011

On February 24, 2011, at 1:00pm, The Coalition Against Trafficking Women (CATW) hosted a CSW side event titled “Trafficking, Prostitution and Work” at the Church Center, One UN Plaza. Representatives from several NGOs served as panelists to create a discussion around the persistent conceptual divide between the perception as prostitution as work and sex trafficking as exploitation. While human trafficking has received much international attention in recent years, prostitution remains seen in many circles as a nuisance, not a human rights violation. Speaking to a packed room, the panelists passionately argued to for greater condemnation of prostitution and dispel the view that it can in any way be considered legitimate because it is a “job.” The discussion attempted to bridge prostitution and human trafficking together as troubling modes of abuse that must be properly addressed.

Vednita Carter, Founder and Executive Director of a non-profit called Breaking Free, highlighted the need for greater analysis and discussion of prostitution and human trafficking at the structural level. Ms. Carter stressed that prostitution is similar to sex trafficking in that the same tactics of domination, power and control pervade the relationships between women and their “pimps.” This domination she claims can partly be ascribed to structural market forces that leave women not only psychically and emotionally harmed, but in economic bondage as well. Prostituted women are often seen as commodified assets that depreciate in value. She also strongly refuted the claim that women involved in prostitution “have a choice” to enter and exit the industry. Instead, Ms. Carter called for a greater emphasis in examining prostitution within the lens of capitalism, so as to properly account for the lack of feasible economic opportunities for women in poverty.

Other panelists further commented on the commodification of women in human trafficking, and highlighted the lack of political will in some countries to combat the issue. Sigma Huda, Former UN Special Rapportuer on Trafficking Persons, shared a perspective from India where prostituted women have been labeled as “vagrants” and the state government has levied laws to evict them from their homes. This kind of law is one indicator, she said, of not only the lack of political will to create appropriate legislation to eliminate sex trade, but to dispassionately punish the victims as well. This stems from the possibility that these kinds of laws are politically crafted to frame the issue around regulating immigration, not illegal human trafficking. Commentating on the commodification of women, she shared a disturbing story from India where police asked a man why he brutally assaulted a young girl after he paid her for sex. The man plainly stated that he felt justified in his actions merely because he had paid money for

“services” and believed he could do whatever he wanted to her because of this. This dehumanization of trafficked sex workers as mere commodified assets was a point of outrage shared with the other panelists, as they affirmed their united belief that the status quo of human trafficking must not be tolerated.

Human trafficking stands as a human rights violation that is central to Global Action to Prevent War’s commitment to advocacy for women, peace and security. The sexual exploitation of young women and girls in the sex trade industry is not acceptable. There must be serious, concerted efforts at the global level to eradicate human trafficking altogether. Global Action affirms the UN’s declaration of human trafficking as a “crime against humanity” and urges full commitment to fulfilling the agenda to combat trafficking as outlined in the “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons”, drafted in 2000. Policy must focus on both the rescue of young girls and women from sexual bondage, and also to give victims adequate opportunities to flourish when reintegrated into society.

Empowering Women to Document Their Experience in Peace and Security as a Research Tool

March 2, 2011

On Wednesday, March 2, 2011, the Kings College Fellows, including, Shuvai Nyoni (Zimbabwe), Phidelia Amey (Ghana), Toyin Ajao (Nigeria), Haja Saramba Kandeh (Sierra Leone), Dera Mwase (Zimbabwe), Selam Terefe (Ethiopia) and Myriam Wedraogo (Burkina Faso), met in the Church Center Building to discuss their findings on empowering women to record their personal experiences as a research tool. Working on behalf of the African Women Leadership Fund, the Fellow’s interests ranged from gender based violence and women in conflict to women’s technological empowerment throughout Africa. An theme stood out, namely bridging the gap in knowledge on peace and security issues and women’s participation

The panel discussion underscored three important issues: (1) the significance of documenting women’s stories, (2) hindrances to women documenting such experiences, and (3) the next steps in furthering the spread of women’s stories. With regard to the first issue, the panelists agreed that documenting women’s stories not only touches lives, but also helps to ensure efficiency, as the next generation of researchers could effectively follow in their predecessors’ footsteps. Furthermore, the group described two factors that add to the difficulty of documenting women’s stories. Ms. Haja Saramba (Sierra Leon) explained that many women describe participating has as difficult because the processes are too “theoretical,” complex and overcomplicated. To simplify the process, she advocated adopting a book of Testimony that would open communication to women with varied educational levels. Ms. Selam Terefe (Ethiopia) focused on her personal experiences, where the Ethiopian government has been the single greatest obstacle to the spread to open communication because it imposes burdensome requirements and limitations. Recognizing that small-scale changes, like training women to use recorders to document their stories or taking pictures with their mobile phones can be effective.