

55TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
FEBRUARY 22 – MARCH 4, 2011

On Tuesday, 22 February, 2011, the 55th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women will commence with the Opening Plenary Session. This commission is the largest global meeting which takes place on an annual basis to assess needs of policy and practice on behalf of women and girls. There is a great deal of anticipation for the 55th session which correlates with the new UN Entity for Women, a newly-formed, much-desired Office which will be held by former Chilean president, Michelle Bachelet. The primary theme for the 55th session is: **“Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including the promotion of women’s equal access to full employment and decent work.”** The review theme is: **“The elimination of all forms of discrimination & violence against the girl child.”**

Due to the recent and urgent construction project at the United Nations facilities, there have been severe restrictions for the upcoming CSW, which must take place in the North Temporary Lawn Building. The decision has been reached by the Commission to restrict NGO delegations to no more than 20 participants, to be given Grounds Passes to enter the UN CSW events on UN premises. Moreover, only 1-2 actual grounds passes will be given daily to each registered NGO. This should accommodate a “reasonable use of the premises”. Nevertheless, over 400 NGO’s have pre-registered over 3,440 Delegates. Many will be attending the public Parallel Events to be held in UN Church Center and the Salvation Army Justice Center, as well as other public forums such as the Consultation Day on 21 February, Morning Briefings by the Committee, Caucuses, and worship services.

As Anglicans committed to the Millennium Development Goals, including the promotion of gender equality, the reduction of child mortality, improvement of women’s health, the elimination of extreme poverty, and achieving universal education, the response to the UN CSW has consistently been strong, and is no less so this year. The UN requirements have forced the Office of the UN Observer to notify Primates about the severe restriction of allowed Delegates, and AUNO is seeking a reasonable balance in providing participation of Delegates from across the Anglican Communion. While the Office is making every effort to help with funding those in extreme need (for the sake of a balanced participation) the request has been made to Primates to seek funding sources wherever possible. There has been resounding support by Primates in an effort to provide the ACC with a globally representative population. In an effort to refuse no Anglican who can arrange to fund a trip to the CSW55, there will be a second category identified as Attendees, who will be given the support and encouragement of AUNO, guidance re: the UN and CSW opportunities and such hospitality as will be provided to Delegates who are given badges. We are one Communion and will function as such at CSW55. It is estimated this year’s numbers in attendance on behalf of the ACC will be near 100, including large delegations of interested attendees from the U.S. and Canada, a delegation of indigenous women, and a number of girls and young women in response to their involvement in the review of the girl child.

Participation of members of the Anglican Communion remains strong in the planning, preparation and involvement in NGOCSW events. Delegates and attendees are involved in holding Parallel and Side Events, organizing caucuses, and this author will be moderating a UN government parallel event on the review of the girl child as well as chairing the NGOCSW Planning Committee. Most ACC Attendees and Delegates will attend the opening Consultation Day on their first official day at CSW55. And girl delegates from overseas as well as local Episcopal girls will be in attendance at the girls orientation day “Girls Stand Up,” which will prepare them to have a voice at the table of the Commission. It is our desire and intention to serve the Communion and the world well through the blessings of participation together at CSW55.

As of this writing, CSW55 is in its final days. Our delegation has been fully engaged with various caucuses and side events. Two side events that stand out are 1) The Center for Global Women’s Leadership (CWGL) “20th Anniversary Symposium.” It was packed with scholars and activists from around the world. 2) Unicef - “Have Women Forgotten Girls?”

AUNO will receive reports next month from the following delegation on their reflections on CSW55. These reports will also include an overview on a particular event that stood out for them.

Alice Garrick – Pakistan
Alicia Sibaen – Philippines
Avelina del Aguila – Mexico
Elsie Dennis – US Indigenous – Virginia
Evanilza Laureiro – Brazil
Gill Jackson – UK
Nellie Adkins – US Indigenous – Seattle
Sarah Stevens – New Zealand
Tumaini Aminiel Sarakikya – Tanzania

Hairi Ohmachi - Japan
Helen Stawski - UK
Inamar de Souza - Brazil
Marie Carmel Chery - Haiti
Marion Little - Canada
Mei Miki - Japan
Pumla Titus – South Africa
Thandeka Mashwama – Swaziland
Florence Akinkoye - Nigeria

Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. (Psalm 82:3)