



April 17th, 2021

To the attention of Cheryl Hayles, President of the International Alliance of Women

Report on CSW 65th Session by Rose Côté, IAW Delegate

PRIORITY THEME: Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls

REVIEW THEME: Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development

Dear all,

Having the incredible opportunity to attend the 65th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, was a unique experience for me. Although this was only my first year as a delegate of the International Association of Women (IAW), I felt welcomed from the very first moment and was very honored to have been able to take part in this event. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's commission was held online, via video conferencing platforms, from March 15-26, 2021. Despite the difficulties of pre-registration and general technological issues, the online version allowed for better accessibility that travels to New York did not offer which encourages reaching out to women from everywhere. As a member of an ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organization (NGO), I was able to participate in side events, as well as parallel events that were relevant to better understand the different topics of discussion.

The following text will present my experience on the commission, the meetings I attended, and my personal conclusions on the main themes of the year.

- *Building forward for a fair recovery and gender equality at work (03/15)*
- *Connecting the dots for equality: abortion, empowerment and sustainable development (03/16)*
- *Feminist Leadership addressing VAWG during COVID-19 (03/17)*
- *Youth driven mentorship model bridging the inequalities in education (03/18)*
- *Practicing feminist disability rights organizing strategies for collective action (03/19)*
- *Vocal Empowerment Curriculum for Young Women's Civil Voices (03/22)*
- *Ensuring participation of migrant and ethnic women in post-COVID-19 decision-making (03/22)*
- *Generation Equality: Including diversity to the Beijing+25 Process (03/23)*
- *Anti-Racism Workshop (03/25)*
- *Protecting the rights of women and girls from discriminatory practices (03/25)*



Changing gender-based norms by promoting women's decision-making in society

The tendencies to be just or unjust, to respect every human being and to act with kindness or by using violence are mostly developed at home. From an early age, each child must be included in decision-making, as well as caring for the household. Force-feeding children ideals of a man's stature through cartoons, society will now need to emphasize healthy masculinity, which is a backwards representation of humanity in the most basic actions. Since these generalizations come from cultures and traditions, it will require a global transformation of the population's mentality, partly through moral, intellectual and spiritual education.

Facing the consequences of COVID-19 to achieve the empowerment of all women

Due to the global pandemic, the majority of job losses was suffered by women, who have been unfairly, but immediately designated to take care of the household. Fear of retaliation has also caused women who experienced wage inequality to remain silenced. We must therefore build a system based on trust for women to be heard when they are brave enough to raise their voices. Online circle conversations have proven to be a safe space for women to recognize their role and discuss employment risks, mental health and wellbeing, as well as increased violence. A majority of women, many of them immigrants, have shown their desire to contribute to the community, demanding agency and active role in the rebuild.

Thus, language put forward by the government in agreed conclusions must represent and emphasize the amendments discussed. Binding measures preventing the emphasis on women in politics, popularized to some extent by the media and policy papers, must also be dropped. Promoting women participation in public life is the first step to destroy discriminatory barriers.

The Commission made me discover many ways to take action at different levels to support women of all ages, whether at a local or international level. I will be eternally grateful for everything I learnt and the support I received throughout this event. I look forward to sharing my experience with others, hoping to encourage them to join our fight for gender equality.

Many thanks to President Hayles for giving me the opportunity to participate in such a high-level event at the United Nations, and to Mrs. Saode Savary for her incredible mentorship.

Rose Côté, Member of the International Alliance of Women (IAW)