



EUROPEAN CENTRE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN
CENTRE EUROPÉEN DU CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES FEMMES

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ECICW-CECIF General Assembly 11th -14th April 2013
The Hague, The Netherlands

The General Assembly started with a seminar on April 12th entitled ‘Women as Powerful Agents of Change for Peace and Security’ organised by the Dutch National Council of Women (Nederlandse Vrouwen Raad), the Defence Women’s Network and the Platform for Women and Sustainable Peace at Frederil Kazerne, van der Burchlaan.

The introduction to the seminar was done by a representative of Wo=men, a Dutch gender platform. It is a network organisation which works to connect NGOs between themselves and with governmental institutions. The Dutch National Action Plan focuses on women in regions of conflict; it does not just focus on local men and women but works on an international level. Peace and reconciliation processes, protection of women’s and girls’ rights in conflict areas, and gender dimension of peace processes all arise from the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR1325).

The delegates present were welcomed by **Anne M. Lay**, president of the Defence Women Network. UN Resolution 1325 reaffirms the importance of women in humanitarian response.

Dieny Scheffer, president of the Netherlands Council of Women said that in the Netherlands, on paper women and men have equal rights but this is not so. Problems such as the gender pay gap, underrepresentation of women in management and politics, a high number of cases of domestic violence and high economic dependence still persist. Together with 15 other member organisation, NVR strives to enforce the legislation to eliminate these problems.

Sandra Lutchman, director of the foundation ‘Talent naar de Top’ (Talent to the Top) spoke of the position of women in The Netherlands and the importance of female leadership. Dutch organisations perceive men and women in managerial positions in different ways. This is not the case, however, in voluntary organisations.

Talent to the Top was established about 5 years ago on the request of the Prime Minister of the Netherlands. The educational level of women is relatively high but this is not reflected at the top management of organisations. 4.6% of Dutch women have top managerial positions in stock exchange listed companies and an average of 10 – 13% in Dutch companies. 61 out of the 150 members of parliament are women while only 13% of university professors are females.

The image of the Netherlands is one of a very emancipated country; this is largely true but nevertheless, there is still a 17% gender pay gap. In times of crisis, we must ask organisations what is the norm – is it normal to have more men than women in the managerial positions of the company for example, and who decides what the norm is. Female leadership is a pitfall because women are notoriously known for wanting to tick all the right boxes when they apply for a job. Women are very good at teamwork but what we define as teamwork is different from what men define it as. Men think of their personal position in the team but women think of the team as a whole. It is the mindset of organisations and of men and women that will help us place more women in management.



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There is a glass ceiling in women themselves apart from between themselves because we keep asking ourselves if we are good enough, if we are ready enough and if we are good mothers because we go out to work; we focus on skilled excellence and so we are holding ourselves and each other back.

The economic crisis has caused countries to become more inward looking. If gender diversity is not part of the focus, there will not be any sustainable success. Most students in the Netherlands are leaving the country for better job opportunities and so it is becoming increasingly difficult to find skilled local workers.

Ted Strop-von Meijenfeldt, President of the Platform Women and Sustainable Peace said that the Dutch National action plan is different from others around the world because it deals with different strata of society. 300 years ago, the Peace Treaty of Utrecht was signed although it has never been celebrated up till now. The Treaty has been important for peace in Europe. Most of the victims of wars are women and children. A few days ago, UNICEF published data showing that 80% of children in areas of conflict were documented as having been raped. UN resolution 1325 is as important nowadays therefore as it was in the 1980s when a lot of women were victims of rape in times of conflict.

The next speaker was **Esther Van der Meulen-Van Dijk**, senior policy officer at the Minister of Defence. Based on the second Dutch national action plan, the Dutch ministry of defence created its own action plan. The focus areas of this latter action plan include the incorporation of gender perspective and the inclusion of local women. These focus areas have already led to concrete results. It is still a struggle to implement but the situation has improved greatly. The fact that there are both a national action plan and a ministerial action plan gave a very good opportunity for the implementation of UN 1325.

Corina van der Laan, Head of Stability and Rule of Law Division of the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the ministry integrates UN 1325 in military exercises. They have trained a lot of people who take part in peace-keeping missions and this has helped the building capacity in working on gender issues. The ministry has had a budget cut of 1 million Euros but the budget allotted to gender has remained untouched. The ministry is involved in a project for women on the frontline for women in the Arab Spring countries. This project helps women in these countries to set up organisations, learn how to manage funds, gain experience in running organisations, etc.

A discussion on good practices from focus countries then followed. The panel consisted of **Sabra Bano**, director of Gender Concerns International, **Nicky de Zwaan**, gender advisor IKV/Pax Christi and **Annemarie Zaat**, founder of Foundation Sundjata.

Gender Concerns International has worked on GEM Missions (Gender election monitoring) promote female leadership and inclusive governance within the framework on UNSRC 1325. GEM Missions document denounce any inequalities and discrimination against women that might prevent their political involvement and contribution to a new government.



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Pax Christi started a project in South Sudan together with 5 other organisations and funded by the Dutch government. The project focused on capacity building of women's organisations, future and potential political leaders and to improve gender-sensitive enabling environments. To do this, it became clear that they did not have to work only with women's organisations.

The second panel discussed good practices of diaspora. The members of this panel were **Farida van Bommel**, Women for Peace in the Moluccans, **Stephanie Mbanzendo**, Burundian Women for Peace and Development and **Mekka Abdelgabar**, VOND Darfur Women Organisations in the Netherlands.

Civil wars in the countries of origin of these women have affected their communities in the Netherlands. These women strive for peace building in their home countries. In Burundi, women were encouraged to vote and elect other women into power. These women would like to see war eliminated and means to find a solution to problems. Only dialogue is the way to solve the problem peacefully.

The ECICW General Assembly followed the next day with a whole day meeting where reports from Ukraine, the Netherlands, Malta, Great Britain, Spain, Monaco, France, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Israel, Germany, Austria and Russia were presented. Doris Bingley announced that as a European civil society organisation the European Centre of the International Council of Women (ECICW) is a member of the **European Year of Citizens 2013 Alliance**. Doris Bingley was present in Brussels in January 2013 when ECICW was unanimously accepted as member and Angelika Hechts participated in the March meetings of EYCA.

Jung Sook Kim President of NCW Korea and ICW 1st Vice President presented the ICW Report on behalf of **Cosima Schenk**, ICW President, who could not attend this meeting. **Jung Sook Kim** who hosted the ICW Triennial in Seoul in September 2012 showed the assembled delegates a video of the events in Seoul which was much appreciated by those who could not go to Korea. **Elisabeth Newman**, ICW Vice-President, reported on the 57th CSW in New York with the theme: "Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls". She highlighted on the success of ICW session which took place on 5th March at the Church Centre for the United Nations (CCUN) "Respect for Women & Girls: Equality for all. **Christine Knock**, ICW Vice-President, reported on ICW Committees and urged ECICW members to send the reports to her and Elisabeth as they need to disseminate the ideas and good practices to all ICW member countries. This is a way of networking and learning from one another. The meeting ended with an ECICW Statement.

At this meeting elections were held for a new ECICW Board. **Doris Bingley (Malta)**, was re-elected for a second term of office as **President of ECICW** together with 3 Vice-Presidents: **Anna Maria Castelfranchi Galleani (Italy)**; **Marie - Jeanne Vidaillet-Peretti (France)**; **Aviva Kohlman (Israel)**; Treasurer: **Rosa Artigas (Spain)**; and General Secretary: **Eleni Adam-Valassi (Greece)**.

The next ECICW GA will be held in Monaco between 16th and 21st October 2013.

Doreen Micallef, ECICW Malta Delegate