

My first day of official activities at CSW63



Rebecca Bindraban at the CSW63

On the morning Monday March 18, 2019 the UIMF delegation gathered to pick up our UN passes and begin our day attending events at the United Nations headquarter. The first event I attended was by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Gender, Economic Policy and Women’s Human Rights: Tackling Discrimination to Strengthen Social Protection, Increase Access to Service and Transform Systems at 10 AM. The first speaker was Ms. Melissa Upreti who is a women’s rights advocate and expert human rights lawyer. Ms. Upreti started off her talk by identifying the issue that a significant amount of countries has laws that clash with women’s rights and their economic positions. This has created a barrier for women and their economic abilities. For women to be involved in economic endeavors their needs to be transformative policy change with a lack of prioritization for women Ms. Upreti stated. Women do not have adequate representation, and women in national trade policies are

nonexistent. In countries facing crisis women are disproportionately impacted and no country has succeeded in closing the gender gap yet. She continued to talk about women and small businesses, and that women face barriers in in personal business endeavors as well most other service industries. She identified the need to eliminate discriminatory laws and exacerbate women's access to social protection. Additionally, access to public health and the condemnation and politicizations of women's bodies when it comes to reproductive healthcare such as seeking access to birth control or preventative measures is another barrier many for women to take care of hygienic needs associated with menstruation, and the lack of sexuality education are other examples of barriers woman face today in attaining SDG #5. Finally, Ms. Upreti stressed that looking at women's enrollment is not enough must also look at who attends to start figuring out the education disparity women face.

The Next speaker was Ms. Radika Balakrishan on the human's rights framework on macroeconomic policy. The issues, she argues, is that austerity is the standard framework for economic policy. Rather than this mainstream optic she recommended using a human rights framework. This is more effective because whoever is creating these policies must give a better explanation of budget allocations, and how these decisions were made and how that effects women's rights, it is a framework that requires accountability and those who are making the decisions must be coming from different background to inform the budgetary situation. Additionally, the decision making method must be analyzed as well to see how these economic policy decisions are made, she called this progressive realization. The other obligation is to use the maximum amount of resources and to access how much went to women and what were the policy imperatives used when making these allocations. Lastly, she emphasized the importance of substantive equality. Economic policy is extremely important when making substantive equality possible, if not taken into consideration, then nondiscrimination of equality is not fulfilled.

Ms. Bindu Armstrong from the New Zealand Ministry for Women spoke next. Everyone in the room stood up prior to her talk to observe a moment of silence for New Zealand following the terror attack that occurred the week prior. It was powerful standing there in solidarity at the United Nations in surrounded by individuals from countries all over the world in solidarity and

condemnation of terror attacks that occurred at Christchurch. Ms. Armstrong spoke about the NZ Ministry for women and their purpose which is to ensure that the contribution of women and girls are valued and are free from all forms of violence and harassment. The ministry is attempting to release a wellbeing budget, the first of its kind. The hope is this policy model will show that women heavily contribute to the wellbeing of society. NZ has undertaken three initiatives, pay equity, gender pay gap, and eliminating violence against women and girls. In the pay equity initiative, the theme is equal pay for equal work, to ensure all women may access equal pay a bill was introduced, a joint working group of government and union businesses came together to make this bill. Additionally, a 3-year plan was introduced to eliminate the gender pay gap with markers to track its progress, by the end of 2019 all businesses must create a plan to include women in top positions. Ms. Bindu stated 1 in 3 women experience sexual violence mental and physical and women are more likely to get killed in these actions in NZ. She argued a fragmented response system does not work to respond to sexual violence. Therefore, they created an investment strategy and passed a victim protection bill in 2018. This bill grants women 10 days off from work paid if they become victims of domestic violence.

The following speaker, Ms. Shauna Olney, a human rights lawyer spoke about international instruments in the context of women empowerment. The last International Labor Organization Convention was passed in 2011, and Ms. Olney said this is the perfect time to pass another convention to end violence and harassment in the world of work, which women are disproportionately affected by. If a new convention was adopted for women it would make a significant impact, violence and harassment needs visibility to make a world impact. She continued that most countries agree that there should be an integrated and gendered responsive approach, and their needs to be inclusion of all sectors of work to be effective for women. Ms. Karin Ryan was the last speaker and she talked about why international mechanisms make a difference, and the culture around toxic masculinity needs to be addressed in regular social norms and religion. She stressed that women's funding all over the world has dropped and opportunities must find to train and fund NGOs to prepare reports to show in Geneva and NY and about women, and that there is just not enough funding to do follow up work to do presentations regarding the status of women and there is an urgent need to start funding this. I

thought this specific event was very insightful and provided several different mechanisms to improve the situation women all over the world are in. The diversity of the experts and their knowledge was very engaging.



At 1:15 PM I attended Silver Linings: Social Protection and Empowerment of Aging Women. Ambassador Yasuhisa Kawamura of Japan lead the event about aging women. This specific topic for Japan is very salient because Japan has the largest aging population in the world 33.4% or 1/3 of the Japanese population is over 60 years old. Ambassador Kawamura emphasized that it is crucial for each country to talk about their challenge about their aging populations to compare coping mechanisms. The ambassador discussed the reforms Japan was considering including raising the retirement age to 65 to keep skilled workers engaged in the workforce. He also said they are considering universal health care systems for elderly persons and to integrate medical care and long-term care into community-based care to strike the balance between home based and institutional care. Dr. Socorro Reyes or the “activist grandma” spoke from the Philippines next. She advocated for having elderly women be the forefront of the social movement to

improve conditions for the elder population. She said who would be better than the people themselves most affected by this issue to fight for better conditions.



Speakers Panel at the Salvation Army Auditorium

The last event of the day Recreating a Healthier Environment for Empowering Women started at 2:30 PM. This event kicked off with Ms. Hsin Chin Shih, the CEO of Jim Huey Special Welfare & Charity Foundation in Taiwan. Taiwan has the #1 aging speed in the world and rural disparity. Her foundation delivers services in 3 rural areas and helps 10000 elders and disabled peoples in the community monthly. This is accomplished by women, often mothers, delivering welfare services for elders. This empowers women by building on the job training and helping rural communities which makes the practice sustainable. Next, Professor Abdrisaev spoke about the student engaged learning model at UVU and the advocacy of mountains targets in Utah by students at the university and the development of this model. Following this Dr. Antoinette Ellis spoke about lesson send and received for girls and women. I found this relevant to myself personally. She mentioned that empowering girls is about planting seeds of skill development, and that assumptions must be challenged when looking at normative social situations.

Overall the day was extremely interesting, and I found myself very engaged at all events I attended. I appreciated the different angles of women empowerment and the approaches to these angles. It was also really empowering to see all these women talk about women issues, and to see the passion everyone has about their specific areas. It makes me feel like the world really is advancing in SDG #5, or at least is on its way. I want to mention my favorite quote from the day, courtesy of Ms. Karin Ryan about toxic masculinity said, “the patriarchy dies ugly”, indeed it can, but we are on our way!

Rebecca Bindraban, UIMF member