

TO: Maria Elena Elverdin, President FIFCJ  
FROM: Denise Scotto, UN Representative & US VP  
RE: UN REPORT  
DATE: September 28, 2015

## **INTRO**

I am happy to write that for this period, FIFCJ has been well represented at the UN. I am sharing only brief highlights and noteworthy news. In keeping with the past practice, we have held parallel events in the UN Building for the Commission on Social Development and we have also held more than one parallel event during the Commission on the Status of Women. Our focus has been on themes of the commissions with an emphasis on human rights, the importance of law including the rule of law and, at the same time, working in partnership with other NGOs.

The significance of 2015 is emphasized now as the UN celebrates its 70th Anniversary and as we formalize a new way for Member States to organize the work of the Organization. The MDGs has come to a close in the sense that a new development agenda, the Post 2015 Development Agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals, has been taken up to create a World Fit for All and A World We {the peoples of the world} Want. This GA in 2015 sees the adoption of the SDGs and will prioritize work according to them.

As a new way of connecting with more people in a modern way, we also see an emphasis on issues before the Member States through yoga.

## **CSOCD**

While we had approval to hold an event in the UN for the 2014 CSocD 2014 session, the weather was uncooperative and due to snow it was cancelled. The theme from our event during CSocD for 2015 was, "*Using Legal Mechanisms to Strengthen Social Development.*" IAW and Forum 21 were other NGOs that provided speakers and partnered with us for this interactive dialogue.

## **CSW**

The theme from our event during CSW 2014 was, "*The MDGs & CEDAW: Working Together for Women's Empowerment & Advancement.*" We also participated in "*Decent Work & Gender Equality—the Informal Economy,*" with our partner Prof. Shang Luan Yan, Taiwan Chapter. CSW 2015 was a very important year as we celebrated the 20th Anniversary of the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing and the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. The theme for our main CSW 2015 panel was, "*The Current Legal Landscape from Beijing to Today.*" As you can imagine, given this special anniversary, we as a Federation and as individuals also participated in many other activities. Our President has participated for many years at CSW and has continued to do all throughout her term.

## **NGO Conferences**

Last year in September 2014 the UN DPI organized an NGO Conference at NY Headquarters. I was asked to speak on a panel regarding climate change and Johanna Sterbin and I attended many of the panels and workshops.

This year the UN DPI did not organize a special conference the way it usually does in September. Instead a small group of NGOs with the support of various Missions to the UN—Canada, Korea, Denmark, Suriname and Ukraine—got together to organize it. The theme was, "*Honoring the Past, Recognizing the Present, and Imagining the Future.*" There was a call for a limited number of workshop proposals to be held in the UN with the understanding that the room rental fee would be \$300. I am happy to report that the proposal I submitted was accepted and we had a wonderful interactive workshop on the topic, "*The Beneficial Impact of Yoga Upon Health & the Integral Being.*"

### **New Committee**

Back at the end of December 2014, the UN GA adopted a Resolution marking the 21 June as the International Day of Yoga. It will be observed from 2015 onward. The Resolution is under the topic of global health and foreign policy but also stressed the importance of yoga on sustainability, the environment, climate change and the SDGs.

Back in January of this year, I and a colleague from the Brahma Kumaris started talking about the GA Resolution and planned events to highlight this resolution at the UNFPA in June and then again for the greater NY community. These events gave rise to people wanting us to continue so we formalized it by creating the newest of the NGO committees, ***the International Day of Yoga Committee at the UN***. I am delighted to share that I was asked to serve as Chair through FIFJ. Johanna Sterbin has also been active in this new committee and we are hoping to formalize her participation as a member at large on our executive board.

In addition to the event at the 2015 NGO Conference in NY, on behalf of the International Day of Yoga Committee at the UN, I also organized an event at the Church Center Tillman Chapel, 21 September, to observe the *International Day of Peace*. We had prayers, poems and music for inner healing for our peace celebration.

### **Conclusion**

On the eve of this report, the GA is still in session. I have attended an event relating to *Persons with Disabilities*, a topic that we have highlighted in the past, focused on getting more attention for it on the UN agenda that was sponsored by the WHO as well as a special event relating to the *Progress of the World's Women and Girls* sponsored by UN Women.