

## **Model for Inclusion. 25 years after the Beijing Conference Violence against Women remains an Issue.**

The first virtual 65th session of the UN-Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the NGO parallel events (March 15-26, 2021) recorded over 25'000 registrations. This is 20% more than for the 64th session in 2020, the UN Jubilee year for Beijing+25, 25 years since the 4th WCW in Beijing 1995 with its Platform for Action and Declaration, which had to be cancelled. Since over 25 years results achieved are regularly examined and fears are rising about the increasing criticism and lack of implementation. UN accredited NGO's offered over 700 online parallel events in relation to the 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 empowering of all women and girls" and the review theme "Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development". The final document with agreed conclusions has a volume of 24 pages.

It needs to get used to virtual sessions, besides the advantage of large possible registration (no visas required, no travel expenses), it is not possible to compensate virtually physical meetings, conversations, casual contacts. In his Town Hall meeting UN GS António Guterres pointed out that Gender Equality is a question of power. In a male dominated world the issue of gender based violence has to become central in all issues. In such a culture violence against women tends to be declared as non-existent. The fact that men decide about women's issues represents a form of violence. Now more and more it is spoken out. Younger people are more open for a culture based on gender equality. Member states should be made responsible for human rights violations. But most violations of human rights, especially violence against women, are not sanctioned and the mechanisms to make them accountable are weak. Power should be responded by power. In order to break such kind of circle up maybe quota should exceptionally be applied. For Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, to make a change would mean to have an equal participation of women and men, just some female representatives would not be sufficient.

The sudden withdrawal by Turkey from the Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe appeared as a demonstration of power. Turkish women are afraid of similar reactions followed by other countries (e.g. Bulgaria). For them it is an 'illegal' and undemocratic act. And the increasing violence against women and girls in Turkey, in the extreme with femicide, lets them experience a loss of protection, if the Istanbul Convention is not anymore in force. They hope for solidarity by women NGOs and institutions as well as reactions from UN-member states.

In an Interfaith Remembrance, organised and celebrated by the CCUN and their Methodist Rev. Dionne Boissière, many women of NGO-CSW reminded of feminists passed away in 2020 as well as of Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Their lives were shaping examples for many of the participants and this act of remembrance gives a possibility to practice humanity. Meditative musical improvisation accompanied this act, dedicated to Maria, Sophia and Shekhina, the Jewish allegory of the female side of God.

Quite a number of side and parallel events were dedicated to Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council (2000). The claim of this resolution to include women at the peace negotiations' tables has not been realized yet. Azza Karam, General Secretary of Religions for Peace and Moslem, reminded that the roots of this resolution lies in women of faith communities who were brokering peace in conflicts and crisis. How to include women at the negotiation table? Faithful women slaves in USA some time ago struggled not just for themselves as women. Their peace activities aimed at possibilities for others to create peace. So not just inclusion of women is necessary but women with a faith-basis are already represented and are the model how women can and should be included. She insisted that truth has to be spoken out against power. The Resolution 1325 is an instrument for such a possibility. A moral presence is needed at the table, as well as a wide range of interests and diversity. Women proved to contribute to a lasting peace when given the possibility at the negotiation table. Liberia is such an example. So the role of women is an ongoing issue connected with the right to peace. Women push peace forward and are the conscience of society. Women in the role of faith leaders of faith communities are committed to long-lasting peace.

Rev. Dr. Esther R. Suter

English translation of the article (of Esther R. Suter) "Modell für Inklusion. 25 Jahre nach Peking-Konferenz bleibt Gewalt gegen Frauen ein Thema», published in Ökumenische Information, No 13-14, 30.3.2021 KNA - Katholische Nachrichtenagentur, Bonn/Berlin