

News Line 19

December 2004

In News Line 18 we announced the Taiwanese Meeting as forthcoming event and that is where we continue today.

INLW Kaoshiung and L.I. Executive Meeting March 2004 – Liberal International Asian Conference 4-6 March 2004

On 4/3/2004 instead of holding the Management Board Meeting, the Honourable Vice-president of Taiwan, Ms. Annette Lu, officially invited us in audience. Also present was Nobel Prize winner for peace, Ms. Betty Williams of Ireland as special guest of Ms. A. Lu. She was taking part in the presidential campaign promoting support for Annette Lu as vice-presidential candidate. The visit was very pleasant and interesting, discussions concentrating on issues concerning women's rights, women's peace-making roles and the position of women in Taiwan on all levels. We had a hand-in-hand farewell, as a reminder of the two million Taiwanese, who participated in a hand-in-hand rally on the 28th February 2004, reproducing a human wall to demonstrate that they want peace and democracy for their country.

The INLW Management Board Meeting took place one day later on the 5/3/2004 and was attended by the Chair, Joaquina Alemany, the Secretary General, Margaret de Vos van Steenwijk, the Taiwanese member Yi-Jin Yeh and Deputy Assistant, Silvia Flury and a Senegalese, Pakistani, Taiwanese and Dutch representation. The agenda covered several points: proposals of constitutional changes to be presented at the next General Assembly, two urgency resolutions and an agenda for next MBM at Costa Rica and regional news from members.

The text of the draft resolutions presented by INLW for debate at the Executive Meeting was:

1. The Democratic Consolidation and the Role of Political parties.
Noting that Democracy needs a free and fair society, which guarantees the possibility, for women and men, of a full access to participate in political parties.
Acknowledging the obstacles that still exist in many countries for women to have equal chances in political life.
Recalling the LI resolution on Good Governance, which stressed the need to have effective political parties and electoral systems in order to strengthen parity and democracy itself.
Recognizing that both cultural diversity and different political traditions among LI groups and parties members mean that each country has to find its own appropriate and specific measures and actions to ensure women's participation.

The Executive Committee:

Calls on member parties to take positive actions to ensure that appropriate circuits and networks are created to favour political participation of women
Demands that liberals in governments propose structural reforms in electoral systems to facilitate parity democracy.

2. Rights of Women in Iraq:
Recognising the many concerns e-mailed to the INLW by Iraqi women and
Noting the removal of Resolution 137 of the Constitution, which addressed women's rights and banned arbitrary divorce and polygamy, child custody and property inheritance;

The Executive Committee of Liberal International, convening in Kaoshiung, Taiwan, March 4-6 2004; Calls on all Liberal International member parties to press their respective governments to urge the Iraqi Government Council to propose an electoral system for the country that ensures equality of opportunity, and equality of participation in election and decision-making and recognition of women's rights.

The Iraqi resolution was accepted and the other one was not considered to be urgent. However INLW will insist to put it forward as a recommendation to member parties. (see hereafter). The Human Rights Committee of LI, informed members of a strategy of promoting women's rights, a proposal from President Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, who also subscribed the Madeleine Albright "Win with Women Global Action Plan" promoted by the NDI. This guideline advocates an

increase of women in leadership and decision-making positions in politics and explains in four points recommendations on how to achieve these goals. These are:

- Remove restrictions on women's political participation, including restrictions on women's suffrage and candidacy.
- Increase the number of women elected officials at the national, provincial and local level.
Ensure that political parties include women in meaningful leadership positions and in meaningful numbers.
- Encourage greater participation of women in government decision-making and advocating for legislation that enshrines full equality of men and women.

The Human Rights Committee's proposal was to open the discussion to all member parties, organizing meetings in Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia, in order to set up rules and targets and recommendations for political parties to implement a meaningful reform. At that point Joaquina Alemany insisted that INLW should go hand in hand with L.I. on this issue and take part on these rounds of discussions. She also offered to host one of the meetings in Barcelona.

Furthermore INLW participated in the L.I. Programme and agenda, i.e. "Executive Meeting of the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats" and the Liberal International Asian Conference on "Democratic consolidation and the role of political parties". The last agenda point consisted of an afternoon and evening spent taking a look at the presidential campaign techniques of DDP and taking part actively in a rally and a mass meeting accompanying the city major of Kaoshiung on his campaign in support of the presidential candidate. We were very impressed by the enormous crowds who were attracted every evening to listen to the speeches of the President, his wife and other liberal party VIPs.

48th Commission on Status of Women 1-12 March 2004 New York

This commission was attended by Vice-president of INLW, Jeannine de Bocard, and INLW member M. Carmen Solsona, which focussed on:

The role of men and boys in promoting equality between women and men: realizing objective strategies and application of measures in critical areas and other measures and initiatives. The participation of women in the prevention of conflicts, in peace-making after a situation of conflicts, as well as negotiation in the reestablishment of peace.

For more information: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw

60th Commission on Human Rights 15-27 April 2004 Geneva

This commission was attended by Vice-president of INLW, Jeannine de Bocard. The Commission was chaired by Ambassador Michael P. Smith, Australia and the high level debate was attended by 80 chiefs of States and high ranking ministers. A fact which tends to demonstrate that despite the menaces hovering over the future of CHR such an UN organ is still of great importance. The Commission considered questions on racism, minorities and migrants; women's rights; freedom of speech and religious intolerance; cultural, social and economic rights; the right to development.

A special report has been written about this commission by Mme Jeannine de Bocard

ECOSOC High Level Segment Commission July 2004 New York

This meeting was attended by INLW member of Management Board, Legislator Ms. Yi-Jin Yeh.

In July we welcomed in Barcelona a delegation of Taiwan, who was attending Barcelona Forum 2004. Joaquina Alemany, chair of INLW, invited Minister of Youth, Li chiun Cheng and President of the Oficina Economica y Cultural de Taipei in Madrid, Mr. Lan chi-Ming and their staff for dinner, where we commented on cultural and social aspects of women in both countries. We were handed out a grant-in-aid of 1000 US dollars as operating funds for International Network of Liberal Women from INLW Management Board member Ms. Yi-Jin Yeh with many thanks from the chair, Joaquina Alemany.

L. I. Roundtable meeting and training seminar "Promoting women's political participation" 2-3 October 2004 Bucharest, Romania

Meeting organized by Liberal International and sponsored by ELDR, Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, D66, VVD and PNL/ Romanian Liberal Party.

This event was the first roundtable announced at the Human Rights Commission of L.I. in Kaoshiung to take place in different continents to discuss measures and targets to increase women's participation in politics. Over a hundred participants were present at this event. We were invited to join the roundtable and the result is -with slight differences- the same story worldwide: Women are absolutely capable of standing for candidacies at all political levels. However one of the major problems is the internal party system to choose balanced candidacies i.e. more women in meaningful positions. The other problems emerge from family responsibilities, economical independence and other cultural restraints. But we have seen and met enthusiastic and strong women defending and fighting for the recognition of their rights. INLW was represented by Joachima Alemany, Margaret de Vos van Steenwijk, Joana Flores, Sylvia Flury and Judith Pallares.

The INLW proposal to the round table meeting was: A Liberal Action Plan to implement women's participation in politics - Equal opportunities for women and men - The Liberal Way. Worldwide women make up more population than men, but are largely and not sufficiently represented in political decision-making. Worldwide most women because of social, economic and cultural restraints cannot accept political careers, although they are competent. Worldwide the lack of women in political decision-making is also a lack of true democracy. Liberal women have to participate actively in politics.

Liberal parties have to insist on equal rights and opportunities.

Liberal parties know that women's rights are part of human rights.

Liberal parties have to insist in a balanced representation in decision-making in their parties in order to achieve true democracy.

Proposals for implementation

Liberal parties should implement concrete measures in their own organizations and therefore have to:

Increase the pools of women candidates, through training, gender-balanced working groups and gender-balanced campaigns.

Have to insist in structural changes in legislation and all forms of positive actions for women's political participation.

Have to watch at adequate mechanisms of gender-balance in putting up electoral lists in their own organizations, in their constituencies, for local, territorial, national and international level elections.

INLW and L.I. Executive Meeting, Costa Rica, 4-6 November 2004 – Liberal International Latin America Conference

Global Action Plan "Promoting Women's Political Participation" Meeting.

This event was scheduled Thursday morning 4th November, organized by L.I. and sponsored and chaired by Shyh-fang Liu, DPP party of Taiwan. Over 80 women from all parts of Central and Latin America attended the event named "Promoting Women Leaders" to discuss a plan for the improvement of participation of women in politics and how to implement reforms in their proper parties to implement balanced candidacies. The presidency pointed out the recommendations made in Bucharest which are the following:

Add a fifth plank that will look at female outreach. There seems to be a dilemma in the fact that although women fully support the idea of more women in leadership positions, they seem hesitant to cast their vote on women candidates.

Monitoring. Liberal International should ask member parties to give a yearly report on the number of women; in their party; on behalf of their party in parliament, regional parliaments and town councils and in top government positions. This will enable LI to produce an annual report which presents the figures on women's participation of all LI member and observer parties.

Role of the political leadership. To ask liberal leaders to take genuine reform steps to encourage women's political participation and increase women's leadership in their parties.

To include on the agenda of a liberal leaders meeting the increase of women's leadership in political parties.

To look at mechanisms political parties have put in place to ensure a higher participation of women in leadership positions.

Inspiration through articles of influential and successful women.

Joaquima Alemany's (chair of INLW) contribution to the discussion was a full support to all women having put forward their impressions, experiences and also solutions on promoting major participation of women in politics on all levels.

Joaquima Alemany, also attended the seminar sponsored by Friedrich Naumann Stiftung "Marketing Político" on how to spread and implement liberal ideas in Latin America. This took place on 3rd and 4th of November and ended up in the launching of the Regional Latin America Liberal Network "RELIAL", which we congratulate and wish success.

Jeannine de Bocard, Margaret de Vos van Steenwijk, Sylvia Flury and Judith Pallares also attended the LI Latin American Conference on "Poverty Alleviation: Beyond the Washington Consensus".

On Friday INLW invited Central and Latin American deputies and senators of liberal parties for a luncheon-conference on the issue of "How to alleviate poverty" viewed by liberal women. Our special guests were the president of the Movimiento Libertario, Mr. Otto Guervara and the president of the Chamber of Commerce of Costa Rica, Ms. Evita Argueda. (Translation of the document will soon be available). An inspiring afternoon and the women from different countries were pleased to get this opportunity from INLW to discuss these problems together.

At the Executive Meeting of L.I. INLW had to defend our position in two amendments to the Constitution, one put forward by the commission and one put forward by INLW. The first one was limiting our presence to 10 votes, instead of the present 20. The voting however granted us the 20 votes again. The second amendment with the proposal of having a member of INLW in the Bureau was rejected. The INLW Chair, Joaquina Alemany stated at that moment, that L.I. and INLW have to work together in harmony, in order to implement the Millennium Goals as defined by the United Nations, eliminating sexism and promoting gender equality and mobilizing women for the political liberal movement.

All in all, the contacts with Central and Latin American Women were very interesting and hopefully we will once again have many INLW members and liberal friends in this part of the world.

Forthcoming events

Right now in Geneva the preparatory meetings are taking place for the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to be held from 28 February to 11 March 2005, at U.N. headquarters in New York. This will focus on the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the XXI century and the current challenges and forward looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls. INLW also wants to contribute to this issue with a statement and we will be present at Geneva and New York.

For more information on this issue, you can contact
website: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw>

Also very important for everyone to know is that the next Liberal International Congress and General Assembly of International Network of Liberal Women will take place in Sofia, Bulgaria on the 12th to 14th of May 2005.

We encourage all members to join in and work together with us or to send some article(s) of interest to us. Contact via e-mail to: inlw@inlw.org