

News Line 4

January 1999

INLW Welcomes our 12th Group Member!

On 15th January, Elizabeth Sidney met the Leader of the Mongolian Liberal Party and the Chair and Head of International Relations of the Mongolian Liberal Women's Association. They were on a short visit to Britain as guests of the British Liberal Democrats. The Liberal Women representatives immediately decided that the Association should join INLW and the Party Leader, Mr Tomoro Tuvshinbat, joined as one of our male associates. We look forward to welcoming them in Brussels.

The Women's Association is particularly concerned with two issues: the low pay and unsatisfactory working conditions of professionals, 80% of whom are women (professionals include teacher, nurses and civil servants), and the problem of children made homeless by family breakdown and by the very long hours their mothers have to work.

INLW Women at Work!

Beatrice **Rangoni Machiavelli**, elected in October 1998 as first woman President of the European Union Economic and Social Committee, has already begun to make changes. The new ESC will concentrate on fighting unemployment, social exclusion and poverty. Unemployment, she says, is where the exclusion-poverty-crime chain begins. The social impact is devastating. "We must look at unemployment in terms of the cost to society." Creation of new jobs must be a top priority. She plans to increase European citizens' say in European affairs, more social dialogue (including dialogue with NGO) and stronger links with other European institutions. Congratulations to Emmi **Weiss**, elected on 14 November 1998 by the German Group of Liberal International to serve as a Board member in Jana.

Ruth DREIFUSS: first woman President of Switzerland

It was not until 1971 that Swiss women obtained the right to vote. On December 9 1998, Ruth **Dreifuss** became the first woman to be elected President of the Swiss Confederation. Her election was celebrated by women from all political parties.

It seems that 1999 will be the year for women in politics in Switzerland: Trix Heberlin has become President of the Swiss Parliament.

1999 Year of Elections

Between 1.1.99 and 3.3.99, when we meet, Presidential and Parliamentary elections will have been held in Kazakhstan and Nigeria. In the remaining nine months of the year, we shall see Parliamentary elections in Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Panama, Belgium, Portugal and Uruguay. Presidential elections will be held in El Salvador, South Africa and Uruguay. On 10th and 13th June, Europeans will elect a new European Parliament. INLW sends support and best wishes to all women Liberals who may be standing for these Parliaments and Presidencies.

Argelia, denunciada ante la ONU por silenciar la violencia contra las mujeres

El Gobierno de Argelia silencia la situación de discriminación y violencia que viven las mujeres en su país, según un informe presentado (el 21 de enero de este año) por la Federación Internacional de Derechos Humanos (FIDH) ante la Comisión de las Naciones Unidas encargada de la aplicación del acuerdo internacional firmado en 1979 y destinado a proteger a las mujeres de toda forma de violencia.

El informe acusa, igualmente, a los comités de control de la moral del Frente Islámico de Salvación (FIS) de convertirse en verdaderos tribunales de represión con la excusa de vigilar la conducta de las mujeres para que esta sea conforme a las normas del islam.

El informe señala la situación trágica que viven las mujeres viudas o familiares de las víctimas del terrorismo, en particular de las personas 'desaparecidas'. Para acogerse a las medidas de compensación del Gobierno cada mujer debe presentar un certificado según el cual su marido está muerto, lo que choca con el silencio de las mismas autoridades en cuanto a la suerte de los 'desaparecidos'. Pero es el caso de las mujeres violadas y torturadas por parte de los grupos armados, en general islamistas, que deben presentar, igualmente un certificado emitido por la "autoridad competente", con lo que pesa sobre ellas no solo el trauma de la violencia sexual, sino el de la vergüenza social. La mayoría de las mujeres violadas no acuden a denunciarlo. (source: El País, 22 Enero 1999).

On the same question we recommend to read the London Aerogramme issue 35 which contains a long article by Frits Bolkestein, President of Liberal International, based on an interview with Khalida Messaudi 1998 winner of LI Prize of Freedom.

UN Division for the Advancement of Women: Questionnaire on Implementation of the Beijing Platform.

This questionnaire has been addressed to Governments to obtain information on

implementation of the Beijing Platform. The responses should be sent not later than 30 April 1999, to UN Division for the Advancement of Women. In its questionnaire DA W stresses that the information sought is more qualitative than quantitative in nature. Part One should provides a picture of major achievements and obstacles encountered since the Platform was adopted. Part Two focuses on overall implementation, in particular, on resource allocations and institutional arrangements. Part Three invites Governments to describe policies, programmes and projects which have been undertaken to implement the Platform for Action.

A copy of the questionnaire can be obtained from DAW: www.un.org/womenwatchldaw. Make sure that your Government answers the questionnaire, and contact the person responsible for Women's Issues in your country

Women and Political Action

A conference to explore the way forward for women in politics. 18-19 June 1999. Apply to the Gender Research Centre, Middlesex University, Queensway, Enfield, Middlesex EN3 4SF United Kingdom. Telephone: 00 44 181 3625562, Fax: 00 44 181 9626404.

Publications

WOMEN 2000: Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict: United Nations Response (April 1998)

This issue examines steps taken by the UN to address the situation of women subjected to sexual violence during armed conflict since the Second World War. Part I discusses the failure of the international community to address the issue of wartime sexual violence during the early years of the UN; Part II examines the manner in which sexual violence during armed conflict emerged as an item of serious concern within the UN. The concluding session examines how the issue may be advanced in the next century.

See you in Brussels on March 3 1999