

News Line 5

April 1999

INLW obtains Member Status

In November 1997, at the Oxford Congress of Liberal International, INLW obtained Observer Status. The Bureau of Liberal International established the criteria to be applied for upgrading INLW from observer to member. The criteria were: minimum number of individuals and/or group members, the organisation should have own activities and publications and should stand on its own feet financially. The criteria having been met, the Bureau recommended to the Congress the granting of Member status to INLW. The L.I. Congress in Brussels approved the recommendation of the Bureau. In fourteen months we have achieved what most parties and groups need a minimum of thirty six months to achieve.

Liberal International approves equal representation

The Resolution "The World Today" adopted by the Congress includes a strong statement for women equal participation at all levels of public life. Under the Heading "Human Rights and Democracy" it is stated: "*In general this Congress calls upon governments to take action on the following issues...It is not sufficient to ratify treaties it is also necessary to suggest concrete mechanisms. Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women can be achieved by means of enabling **women equal representation** in all decision making positions in parliaments, courts of justice, local authorities, Boards of directors of public companies and other public and governmental institutions. In order to achieve equal opportunities, affirmative action must be implemented as temporary measure to achieve full equality.*"

INLW has asked Liberal International, in a letter addressed to Julius Maaten, Secretary General, to apply and ask all the parties members to apply the equal representation rule for the next Congress in Ottawa to mark the new millennium.

Gender composition of delegations at LI Congress (Brussels 1999)

The overall proportion of women delegates attending the LI Congress in Brussels, was of 23%. Of the 62 delegations registered, 30 delegations did not have a single women delegate. The all male delegations were the following: Andorra, Angola (Partido Angolano Liberal), Bangladesh, Bulgaria (3 parties), Croatia, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Hungary (2 parties), Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands (Democraten 66), Nicaragua, Paraguay, Romania, Russia, Switzerland (2 parties), Tanzania (2 parties), Tunisia, Ukraine, Northern Ireland.

INLW Patrons

We are proud to announce that three most distinguished women have agreed to become INLW's first Patrons:

Beatrice **Rangoni Machiavelli**, President of the European Economic and Social Committee and Vice President of Liberal International.

Loma **Marsden**, President and Vice-Chancellor of York University, Canada, former Canadian Senator (1984-1992).

Annemie **Neyts-Utterbroeck**, Member European Parliament and Deputy President of Liberal International. She will become President of Liberal International at the next LI Congress (Ottawa, 2000)

New Members

Jackie **Ballard** M.P. has joined INLW. Jackie is Liberal Democrat M.P. for Taunton in the UK House of Commons. She has supported women in all UK legislation and is a possible candidate for the Liberal Democrat leadership.

The following groups have joined INLW:

Belgium: "Vrouw en VRIJELD", women's organisation affiliated to the VLD party (Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten). The Chairwoman is Monique **Vanderstraeten**, and the treasurer is Aviva **Dierck**.

Israel: Liberal Women Association. The President is Sara **Doron**.

La parité est adoptée en France

Les députés (à l'unanimité) et les sénateurs (289 pour et 8 contre) Français ont adopté le projet de loi de révision constitutionnelle. Le projet adopté prévoit que "*la loi favorise l'égal accès des hommes et des femmes aux mandats électoraux et fonctions électives*" et que les partis politiques "*contribuent à la mise en oeuvre de la parité*".

Optional protocol to the CEDAW adopted

On 12 March 1999, the forty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women adopted an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. The Protocol contains two procedures: a communications procedure allowing individual women, or groups of women, to submit claims of violations of rights to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; and an inquiry procedure enabling the Committee to initiate inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations of women rights. In either case, States must be party to the Protocol.

The Protocol is the result of four years of negotiations in the Working Group, which was chaired by Ms Aloisia Worgetter of Austria. (source: UNDAW, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw>)

La campagne contre l'excision est lancée au Sénégal

Aujourd'hui, ce sont trente et un villages sénégalais qui ont déclaré publiquement abandonner la tradition de l'excision. Cela représente quelque 18 000 personnes. Un imam s'est même personnellement engagé dans la campagne. Demba Diawara sillonne les villages. Il explique que cette tradition n'est pas liée à l'Islam, et qu'elle est antérieure aux religions.

Le projet de loi interdisant l'excision a été voté par le Parlement Sénégalais. Désormais l'excision est passible d'une peine de six mois à cinq ans de prison. (source: Libération, 11-3-1999).

The House of Lords held that gender-related violence is ground to grant refugee status

On March 25 1999 the House of Lords (UK) rendered an important decision for the protection of women against violence. In a case in appeal before them, they considered that:

"The discrimination against women that was prevalent in Pakistan, combined with the inability or the unwillingness of the state to protect them from gender-related violence where it would have protected men, made women in Pakistan members of a 'particular social group' within the meaning of article 1 A (2) of the Geneva Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. Therefore two Pakistani women who feared returning to Pakistan because of violence and accusations of adultery by their husbands and Pakistani society's condemnation of women who were perceived as sexually immoral, were entitled "to refugee status under the Convention".

Secretary General of Liberal International

Liberal International gave notice that the post of Secretary General is likely to become vacant this summer. For information about the job and how to apply, contact the Secretary General, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HD. (Fax: 00 44 171 9252685).

Publications

Egalité entre femmes et hommes: aspects économiques. Rapport par Béatrice Majnoni d'Intignano.

La documentation Française. Paris. 1999.

Deux conclusions ressortent du rapport. La participation des femmes à l'activité économique est un puissant facteur d'amélioration de la performance économique des pays développés parce qu'elle permet la diversification des talents et oriente la demande des ménages vers des services -de proximité, culturels, loisirs- fort contenu en emplois. Les pays d'Europe du Nord, où l'existence d'un Etat-providence développé a permis de concilier l'activité féminine et les contraintes de la maternité, ont connu un regain de natalité, après la forte baisse intervenue depuis le milieu des années soixante; la fécondité a au contraire fortement diminué dans les pays où le conflit entre activité féminine et contraintes familiales n'a pu être résolu. Une analyse est également offerte au sujet des contrats sociaux entre les sexes dans les différents pays de l'Union européenne, qui prend en compte trois dimensions: politique, familiale et professionnelle.