



# April 2009 LAA/UN COMMITTEE

Legislative Awareness & Advocacy/  
United Nations Committees

April 2009

Zonta Club  
Of  
Northern Valley, NJ

## Say **NO** to Violence against Women



The European Parliamentarian Eva-Britt Svensson called on the members of the EP to add their names to a "Written Declaration on the Say No to Violence against Women campaign." More than 50% of the members signed on. This is the number needed to present the Declaration to the EP for adoption. The declaration calls on the EU member states to support UNIFEM's campaign and asks for a "European Year on Zero Tolerance of Violence against Women."

In the Philippines, a drive was begun to collect 1 million signatures for UNIFEM's campaign.

In Italy, the Italian Minister for Equal Opportunities, Mara Carfagna, signed on to the campaign during the CSW53 Session. Ms. Carafagna announced that Italy currently holds the presidency of the G8 forum. The G8 will convene a ministerial meeting on ending violence against women prior to the 35th Summit of the G8 which will take place on July 8-10. Ms. Carfagna committed to having the issue reflected in the final Declaration of the G8 Summit.

In Turkey, the State Minister of Women and Family Affairs, Ms. Nimet

Cubukcu as well as Turkey's first lady joined the UNIFEM campaign. Minister Cubukcu wrote, "I am extremely pleased to become a part of UNIFEM's Say No to Violence against Women campaign,...giving hope to large masses by bringing the issue into the global agenda and by highlighting it as a resolvable problem."

The Northern Valley Club's LAA Committee will launch a campaign of its own within the next months. We will be seeking to have municipalities as well as Bergen County sign on to the campaign. Stay tuned for more details.

## HELP NEW JERSEY SHELTERS

The Shelter Our Sisters Alert Network has issued an alert warning that the Domestic Violence Liaison program in New Jersey is targeted to be cut. This program places a domestic violence specialist into the state DYFS offices. SOS and 6 other victim service agencies supervise these "highly critical professionals." The program has had a positive effect on the lives of the families affected by domestic violence. You are urged to contact NJ state leaders

and local legislators to preserve this program and to keep current funding for all programs which are essential to continuing to provide a safety-net for women and children.

Names and addresses can be found on page 3 of this newsletter and a sample letter will be available at our April meeting as well as by email. Email me at [marymac43@verizon.net](mailto:marymac43@verizon.net).

## MEDICAL ERRORS ON THE AGENDA In NEW JERSEY

In 2007, New Jersey hospitals reported 456 medical errors, such as wrong-site surgery and incompatible blood-type transfusions. Currently there is legislation pending in both the Senate and Assembly. The Senate bill is SB-2471 and the Assembly bill is AB 3633. These bills would allow consumers to compare data on medical errors occurring in New Jersey hospitals. Further, the legislation would prohibit hospitals from billing for additional care resulting from such errors.

Let your Senator and Assembly Representative know your feelings about this pending legislation.



The proposal mirrors a federal policy established in 2008 by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

## APRIL IS GENOCIDE PREVENTION MONTH

The month of April is Genocide Prevention Month. The month will include commemorations for the Armenian, Cambodian, Bosnian and Rwandan genocides as well as the Holocaust.

While commemorating these terrible atrocities, the struggle for peace in Sudan continues so it is an important time for Darfur. Our representatives at the United Nations have assured us that the question of Darfur as well as the atrocities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be addressed.

## EARTH DAY 2009

Earth Day 2009 is April 22nd, but we don't need to wait for Earth Day to make a difference. We can do that every day.

- Replace standard light bulbs with energy-efficient fluorescents. (Reduces emissions by 500 pounds per year per bulb)
- Install low-flow showerheads that use less water (reduces emissions up to 300 pounds per year)
- Plant local species of trees
- Wrap your water heater in an insulating jacket (Reduces emissions up to 1,000 pounds per year)
- If you are buying a new car, buy one that gets at least 30 miles per gallon (it reduces carbon dioxide by 2,500 pounds a year over a car that gets 10 miles per gallon less)

Eco-friendly toys:

- Eco dollhouse with solar panels and recycling bins
- Totem model kit made from recycled cardboard pieces
- Rufus the Polar Bear—eco-friendly materials and non-toxic finish
- Wishbone starter bike—made from reclaimed wood and 60% post consumer recycled plastic wheels



In 1977, environmentalist and activist Dr. Wangari Maathai started the Green Belt Movement. It was a grass-roots movement that has planted more than 30 million trees in Kenya in order to prevent soil erosion. Dr. Maathai was the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

A documentary about Dr. Maathai's movement shows how her organization even helped to bring about the downfall of a 24-year-old dictatorship. The documentary is titled "Independent Lens: Taking Root," and is being shown on PBS stations. The documentary is an inspiring one.

**"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children."**

**Native American Proverb**

## CEDAW

# THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

CEDAW is the international human rights treaty that is exclusively devoted to gender equality. It is in CEDAW that the international human rights system's philosophy of gender equality is expressed.

Under CEDAW, the State is required to take "all necessary measures" to eliminate discrimination against women. This includes overturning bad laws, but extends much further—to introducing new gender-sensitive laws and policies, changing the attitudes, practices and procedures within government, ensuring that private organizations and individual citizens do not discriminate against women, and changing harmful cultural stereotypes. In some areas where the long-term effects of discrimination are evident, laws may

be required to give women not just equal treatment, but preferential treatment. In CEDAW, these are called "temporary special measures." Such a measure may be quota laws for political representation.

CEDAW assumes that States have the obligation to "respect, protect and fulfill human rights." CEDAW also makes it clear that these responsibilities extend to private life as well as public life. One of the obstacles to women's realization of full human rights has been the perception that the State has no right to interfere in "private family relationships." CEDAW recognizes that the State should take steps to insure that women are not subjected to violence by their partners.

CEDAW has 30 articles in all. The first 16 deal with "The Scope of State Obligation" and the last 14 deal with "Monitoring CEDAW's Implementation."

The hope is that CEDAW will be ratified by the U.S. Senate. The original treaty was signed by President Jimmy Carter 30 years ago. However, a treaty must be ratified by the Senate in order for it to take effect.

Your LAA Committee has letters available for members who are so inclined to send to our New Jersey Senators, Frank Lautenberg and Robert Menendez. They are also available through email. Please consider sending a letter or an email.

Be a Voice!



## New Jersey Legislative Contacts

Senator Barbara Buono—Budget and Appropriations  
Chair

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Assembly Budget Chair—Louis Greenwald

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In all there are six NJ State Senators and twelve State Assemblymen/women in Bergen County's six districts.

If you wish to know who your representatives are, you can go to [www.njleg.state.nj.us/](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/) On the home page, on the left, click on MEMBERS. On the next page, on the right, click on Municipality. Click on your town. That will bring you to a page which will show you what district you are in. Click on the district number and it will give you the names and contact information for your senator and assemblymen/women.

If you have any difficulty, please email me and I will send you the information.

## AFGHANISTAN WOMEN STAGE PROTEST

Last week the New York Times reported on a protest staged by Afghan women. The title of the article was “Afghan Women Defy Convention, and Crowds, to Protest New Law on Home Life.” The law, approved by both houses of the Afghanistan Parliament was signed by President Hamid Karzai. It applies to the Shiite minority only. The women were protesting various provisions of the law. One provision makes it illegal for a woman to refuse to give her husband sex when he demands it. Also, a woman must ask her husband’s permission to work outside the home. Third, it is illegal for a woman to refuse to “make herself up” or “dress up” if that is what her husband wants her to do.

The protestors were accosted by groups of men shouting “Whores.” the women, about 300, walked two miles to the Parliament. They delivered their petition which called for the repeal of the law.

The New York Times quotes one woman as saying, “It means a woman is a kind of property, to be used by the man in any way that he wants.”

President Karzai, because he has come



under intense pressure from the international community for signing the law, has been looking into ways to remove the most offensive sections of the law. He said that it was actually not yet law because it had not been published. He said that means that it can be changed.

The Afghan Constitution provides for equality and protection for women. The President promised that the law would conform to the Constitution.

The women went to a Shiite school, the School of the Last Prophet. One woman said through a megaphone, “We are here to campaign for our rights.” We should applaud these courageous women.

## UNIFEM'S 4 FUNDAMENTAL PROGRAMS

UNIFEM’s support for advancing women’s human rights starts with its four fundamental programming areas: “reducing feminized poverty, ending violence against women, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and achieving gender equality in democratic governance.”

Women suffer the denial of rights in all parts of the world. “Women’s rights are violated wherever they are poorer than men, confront discrimination in access to land and employment, or don’t participate in the decisions that affect their lives. Other obstacles to rights arise when women are prevented from going to school or attaining health care, or are subject to harmful traditional practices.”

According to UNIFEM, women all over the world are turning to CEDAW as a “human rights tool.” UNIFEM assists these women by helping with projects that find the inconsistencies between laws of the country and CEDAW. In this way they look for ways to call for

what the treaty promises. UNIFEM also works with governments “to improve their ability to pursue policies and laws that uphold CEDAW and to monitor progress.”

UNIFEM has 15 sub-regional and two national offices. These offices support programs within countries. The aim is to promote women’s empowerment, secure their rights, and attain gender equality.

On March 4, 2009, at the 53rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Ines Alberdi, Executive Director of UNIFEM, delivered an address to the Commission. In it she noted that “Since its inception, the UN Trust Fund has been a key global mechanism for supporting model strategies to end violence against women and girls...The 2005-2008 UN Trust Fund strategy introduced measures to enhance its effectiveness, in line with the need for strengthened monitoring and evaluation...at all

levels to ensure coordination, action and accountability.”

In her speech, Ms. Alberdi thanked the member states who contributed in 2008 as well as the Avon Empowerment Fund, Johnson and Johnson and Tag Hauer; the UN foundation, Cinema for Peace Foundation, Zonta International and UNIFEM National Committees from Austria, Iceland, Italy and the United States.

She spoke of emerging areas that will require more attention, such as “incorporating the issue of violence against women and girls into leading policy and funding frameworks; aligning informal and formal justice systems with international human rights standards; addressing sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations; and developing targeted prevention approaches, especially with key groups, such as men and adolescents.”