COMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

INTRODUCTION & LANGUAGE ADVOCACY 101

ON THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW)

WHAT IS THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN?

The CSW is the main global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was established in 1946, and it serves as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The CSW is tasked with monitoring and reviewing progress, and identifying challenges for implementation. It also contributes to the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, so as to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The CSW is supported by UN Women, through the CSW Secretariat.

WHY IS THE CSW IMPORTANT?

Here are a few of the important tasks that the CSW takes on. The CSW:

- Prepares recommendations on promoting gender equality and women's and girls' rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields;
- Sets global policies and standards on gender equality and the rights of women and girls:
- Contributes to shaping the global normative framework;
- Allows for discussions on issues within the Beijing agenda;
- Functions as a potential space for bringing visibility to emerging or forgotten issues:
- Functions as a potential space for sharing, learning, strategizing and demanding structural changes to governments;
- Convenes the largest annual gathering of feminists and gender equality advocates in the world; and
- Provides the opportunity for direct advocacy with governments in NY

CSW PRIORITY THEMES

Each year, there is a priority theme which the CSW discussions center for formulating agreed conclussions. Here are a few examples of past priority themes:

CSW68 - Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.
CSW67 - Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls
CSW 66 - Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes

Make sure that you research each year's priority theme in order to better focus your advocacy!

WHAT ARE THE AGREED CONCLUSIONS OF THE CSW?

They are the main output of the CSW, and usually reflect the debate that took place around each year's priority theme. The Agreed Conclusions are reflected in a document that touches on an analysis of the priority theme and outlines specific recommendations that stakeholders should implement. This includes international organizations, civil society, governments, and supranational bodies*.

The agreed conclusions are negotiated between the governments that are represented as UN Member States, usually during the second week of the event. This gives us essential clues to understand which moments are key in our CSW advocacy. For a detailed recap of the agreed conclusions process, you can check out this guide by OutRight International or this Advocate's Guide to UN Language.

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***SUPRANATIONAL BODIES** ARE SPACES WHERE STATES MAKE COLLECTIVE DECISIONS THAT TRANSCEND NATIONAL BOUNDARIES FOR A COMMON INTEREST AND GOALS. SUCH BODIES INCLUDE THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AS WELL AS REGIONAL BODIES LIKE THE EUROPEAN UNION.

WHY WE WORK WITH MEMBER STATES TO INFLUENCE THE AC

As we've established, the CSW is an intergovernmental body where representatives from Member States are negotiating the Agreed Conclusions. Member States' or regional blocs' positions are negotiated ahead of time. Representatives will check-in and coordinate with capitals for their instructions. Therefore, it's important to work at both national levels and with UN permanent representative levels.

The Member State delegations are composed of people from ministries as thematic experts. In some countries' delegations, there might be experts from Civil Society Organizations. There are also politicians such as ministers, state secretary, and parliamentarians, as well as diplomatic representatives from permanent missions to the UN.

USING MARKUPS FOR OUR CSW ADVOCACY

Markups are a paragraph-by-paragraph, line-by-line review and analysis of the text according to individual or organizational priorities. They are a key tool to include priorities, address gaps and influence the outcomes of a text. Doing a markup involves reviewing, inputting changes, finalizing the text and sending it out.

In the context of CSW advocacy, markups are a key tool in order to convince Member States to take on language recommendations. They provide a standard format for inputs to Member States, they are also a tool for accountability, a way to protect our gains against rollback, an opportunity for advancing our rights, ensuring relevance and accuracy, and reflecting diverse voices and opinions. We think that makeups are most powerful as a collective initiative: one markup backed by ten organizations is more effective than ten markups backed by one organization each. Remember, though, that markups do not happen in a vacuum: political dynamics impact the markup strategy

HOW TO DO MARKUPS

If you want to influence the Agreed Conclussions of the CSW or any other outcome documents through a markup, you can start by understanding the structure of the document. In the case of the Agreed Conclusions, there will be a few Preambular Paragraphs that introduce the theme, followed by Operational paragraphs where concrete recommendations and actions are outlined. Another key aspect of doing a markup is informing ourselves and doing adequate research on the markup topics. A few potential sources to inform your markup include WRC Priorities, the Secretary-General's Report, Reports of the Expert Group Meeting (EGM), and Past Agreed Conclusions.

Markups also have specific keys that you can use. For a more detailed walk-through on how to do a markup, we recommend the Advocate's Guide to UN Language.

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HOW AND WHEN DO WE SHARE THE MARKUPS WITH MEMBER STATES?

There are a few advocacy spaces through which this can be done, such as the Women's Right Caucus (WRC) and the Young Feminist Caucus (YFC). Many of the WRC members hold strong relationships with Member State missions, ambassadors, and negotiators. We follow the timelines of Member States, including groups of Member States closely, and we often share our markups via email. For example, for the Zero Draft of the CSW68 Agreed Conclusions, the European Union has requested comments from civil society by the 9th February.

The WRC is a self-organized space for feminist civil society advocates, created to reflect and strategize on current and emerging issues around CSW. We endeavour to influence political outcomes at CSW through the feminist agenda and concretize collective advocacy efforts. The WRC Co-Convenors include Fòs Feminista, APWLD, FEMNET, Young Feminist Caucus, and Outright International.

FURTHER READING

ADVOCATE'S GUIDE TO UN LANGUAGE BY CHOICE - HTTPS://WWW.YOUTHDOIT.ORG/ASSETS/UPLOADS/UN-LANGUAGE-TOOL-2017.PDF

AGREED CONCLUSSIONS PROCESS EXPLAINED - HTTPS://OUTRIGHTINTERNATIONAL.ORG/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/2022-09/CSW66%20GUIDE%20TO%20AGREED%20CONCLUSIONS2.PDF

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