

**A report from Mrs. Cosima Schenk,
ICW-CIF newly elected President**

**32nd General Assembly of the International Council of Women
Held in Johannesburg, South Africa
October 13-19, 2009
Hosted by the National Council of Women of South Africa**

Delegations from 28 affiliated members attended the meeting: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Guatemala, Indonesia, Italy, Korea, Lebanon, Lesotho, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Spain, South Africa, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Ukraine, USA.

On this occasion the centenary of the National Council of Women South Africa, as well as the 120th Anniversary of ICW were celebrated.

**Theme of the Conference: “Challenge of Achieving Gender Equality”
Objectives: the assessment of the achievements during the last triennium, and the definition of the goals and strategies for future commitments.**

Workshop and Seminar:

A workshop on “Communication and Strategies” was held to promote the intensification of communication and networking strategies by sharing information, building partnerships and enhance the visibility of ICW-CIF through global participation. In this respect a specific topic has been developed: “how to deal with the Media and new Communication Tools”

A Seminar called “Women and Children suffering from HIV/AIDS” has been conducted by the NCW SA with a number of prominent speakers. The topics dealt with:

- **Women being victims whilst providing care,**
- **Stigma and socially-accepted misbehaviours towards the victims,**
- **Reality of surviving with HIV/AIDS**
- **Gender issues and related attitudes of violence**
- **Mother to child HIV/AIDS transmission**

One of the main goals of ICW-CIF’s General Assemblies is to provide a forum to its members being the National Councils of Women and their respective United Nations Permanent Representatives, a unique

opportunity to deliver reports about their activities, projects and updated information about their domestic situations.

The “Wrap Up” of those reports is clearly the most important input in the course of the General Assembly.

Not only the Delegates have their say but those reports are essential to the establishment of ICW-CIF’s global policy guidelines.

Among the National Councils the objectives are basically the same, but the approaches and the methods of work are different according to the cultures, the mentalities and the level of social development.

A reminder of our core issues:

- **Trafficking and violence**
- **Service marriage, rape in marriage, impunity of the perpetrators. Rape is in many cultures still considered as a minor crime if not a crime at all.**
- **Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and their correlatives such as xenophobia, lack of integration and training of women.**
- **Education: illiteracy, tertiary courses, access to labour market, women’s leadership training.**
- **“Peace and Dialogue” related to the UN Security Council Resolution 1325: women should be taken into consideration in the negotiating processes, in compliance with international treaties among which the banning of nuclear weapons, landmines and cluster ammunitions.**
- **Endemic poverty: Millennium Development Goals towards reduction of extreme poverty; new aspects of increased poverty have been identified by numerous reports in the case of single parenthood and among both rural and urban women.**

The ICW small Development Projects have been reported in detail: the current projects are in Papua New Guinea (water tanks program), in India (work on artificial limbs), in Former Yugoslavia (FYROM training course for women), in Kenya (cattle husbandry).

Regarding donations and asset-allocation issues:

Launch of the Mehta van den Boogert Award of an amount of 3000 €.

This award will be generously funded by LELAF at every triennial General Assembly to a young ICW member who has demonstrated an outstanding dedication to the Organization and who achieved a special task.

The General Assembly proceeded to the election of the new Board 2009-2012, the Coordinators and Advisors of the Standing Committees accordingly to the requirement of the ICW Constitution.

Some Board Member (Vice-Presidents) positions have not been renewed due to the lack of eligible applying candidates.

A new triennial theme has been discussed and approved by the General Assembly:

“Progress for Women is Progress for All”.

An Interfaith Religious Service was held in the presence of representatives of Christian, Jewish, Moslem, Hindu, Buddhist faith in a spirit of interreligious dialogue and tolerance towards Peace for Mankind.

**Cosima Schenk
ICW-CIF President**