



Proposal for the Establishment of an IFSW UN Commission

Why a UN Commission?

The IFSW Representatives (IFR) to the UN Headquarters in Bangkok, Nairobi, New York, Geneva and Vienna foster a network with a wide range of UN Agencies, for instance with the UN Habitat in Nairobi, various ECOSOC Commissions such as the Commission on Population and Development in New York, CONGO Committees on Drug and Ageing in Vienna and the UNHCR, Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights and WHO in Geneva. Furthermore, at all headquarters, representatives are involved in the Conference of NGOs and its Committees and also in various networks.

In this work, the teams have been working mostly separately, collaboration with other teams took only seldomly place. Why has it become important to change that? Part of the work is to submit written statements (alone or with NGOs), verbal contribution (often it has to be applied for being listed as speaker) and to promote social work in side events or direct contacts with government missions and UN employees. To give an example: especially written statements need to be written in a specific way and many representatives find it challenging or do not know how. In the past few years, we had situations where more than one IFR signed a statement in the name of IFSW and it was bounced back as already another representative submitted a statement. This is frustrating, especially for volunteers as it is demanding to a) write or contribute to a statement and b) reach out to Social Work colleagues asking for their comments, mostly there is only short time to send in the submissions. However, it became unclear who is doing what. Sometimes, double work occurred and sometimes, IFR reduced their engagement. This is one internal example for why a UN Commission, but there are also externals.

With the Agenda 2030 of the UN and its aim to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Social Work have a paramount chance to promote social work but also to build networks that can provide support for IFSW members such as education for social workers, working towards social change by forwarding of the unique knowledge from community level to national and international level.

IFSW has to present a global strategy, the demanding work of IFR needs also to be supported by IFSW and furthermore, the valuable knowledge of the UN work shall flow back to the IFSW board and the IFSW members. The proposal aims to build up an UN Commissioner role

- a) that provide a coordination role for the IFSW Representatives to the UN
- b) that participated on the IFSW board meetings and provides the board with information but also networks
- c) Invite and inform IFSW President, Secretary General and board to consultation process



Vision

That the social work profession is fulfilling its obligations to its own policies in working strategically with other agendas to realise social justice, human and environmental rights and the dignity and worth of all. That IFSW members work jointly with UN agencies locally, nationally, regionally and globally bridging engagement between communities' aspirations, the SDGs and other UN agendas. The strategic positioning of social workers within communities and the UN can lead to community discussion and action advancing self-led sustainable social development.

Key Objectives

- IFSW is represented at UN headquarters and UN regional and national Commissions.
- Established collaboration between IFSW, UN agencies and partners to achieve the SDGs.
- Established Guidelines for how IFSW members can engage in joint work with UN national agencies and contribute to the diverse reporting mechanism such as the Universal Periodic Review or the Voluntary National Reports.
- The UN recognises the social work contribution to sustainable development. For example, by establishing a UN recognised social work day, job description within UN agencies recognising the core skills of social work.
- IFSW promotes its holistic approach to development and models a process that assists in breaking down siloed approaches to development.
- IFSW has a vision for a global appearance to the UN

The focus of the Commission

The IFSW UN Commission's main focus is to promote the IFSW objectives and policies in the UN. Many UN agencies historically have tended towards an 'aid approach' with multiple siloed strategies. The social work perspective focuses more on and holistic /systemic and solution oriented approach to development, community self-determination and social justice.

The Commission, in collaboration with Main Representatives and Representatives to the UN would therefore advocate and develop statements that bring together the multidimensional factors causing marginalization and poverty, discrimination and stigmatization. The commission would support IFSW members to act as facilitators and bridging the gaps between community's aspirations and UN agendas.



The Structure of the Commission

The member of the UN Commission are:

- UN Commissioner
- Main Representatives in each UN Headquarters and region (namely Bangkok, New York, Geneva, Nairobi, Santiago de Chile, Vienna)
- A team of Representatives in each abovementioned region

Below an initial brief structure for establishing the Commission.

Phase one: Building our Capacity

Build a global team with sub teams in each region and the UN headquarters.

To develop a culture of planning and sharing information, developing statements jointly, providing guidance for and acting on behalf of the IFSW members and the communities they work within.

Phase two: Building Capacity within the UN

Build awareness within the UN agencies that enables them to utilise a social work perspective in the development agendas. For example, forming partnerships with IFSW members, stabilising social work job descriptions, co-creating campaigns on a global, national and local level.

Future phases: Towards Fulfilling the Vision Statement

Detailed phases have to be established later in the process.

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In this proposal it is envisaged that every two year there would be a review of the commission that includes reflection on its development and next phases.

Budget

For the first phase, the UN Commissioner needs to invest on the abovementioned issues. There are various meetings with the main representatives necessary in order to build up a proper collaboration. Therefore, it can be expected that the commissioner has to travel. Also a annual meeting with the main representatives is necessary. All together, for the first year (2018-2019), a budget of 15'000 CHF is requested.

First Version, February 2017: Written by Rory Truell, General Secretary of ISW and Priska Fleischlin, Main Representative of IFSW to the UN, Geneva and elected by IFSW board to establish this proposal

Second Version, June 2018: Edition by Priska Fleischlin