



# **IFSW UN Commission Representation to the UN**

## **Objectives, Structure, Function and Guidelines**

### **Introduction**

1) The International Federation of Social Workers is an association with currently 128 national members. Social workers mainly work in direct contact with clients and systems surrounding individuals, families, groups and communities.

2) Social work is also active to prevent and solve structural social problems on local, national, regional and global. The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development presents a worldwide strategy, that supports the work of IFSW Representations to the UN.

3) The United Nations provide a platform for NGOs and civil society to participate within the international community in promoting social development and social justice based on human rights. IFSW has been accredited by ECOSOC since 1959. The following remarks describe the objectives, the tasks, the organisation, the working methods of IFSW representation at the UN.

With the Agenda 2030 of the UN and its aim to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Social Workers have an important function and furthermore, should continue to endorse social work as a human rights profession. Also, to build networks that can provide support for IFSW members working towards social change by imparting the unique knowledge we have from community level to a national and international level. The IFSW Representations to the United Nations (UN) Headquarters and offices foster a network with a wide range of UN Agencies.

*The vision of IFSW is 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 community's 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.*

This paper aims to clarify the vision for this commission and the representation to the UN. It also contains the procedures of elections and will end with guidelines for IFSW representatives explaining the expectation that the IFSW global board raises.



## **Objectives of the IFSW representation to the UN**

The overarching objective of IFSW representations to the UN is to represent a social work perspective to the UN and the UN Agencies and to work towards joint action based on social work principles. Representatives will highlight the social solutions that can be achieved through applying the profession's principles and methodologies as a framework for achieving social justice, inclusive participatory democracy, sustainable peaceful societies, social transformation for equality and rights. Representatives are bound to constitution, definition, ethical principles and the policies of IFSW.

The Commission and the representations work as a part of the wider IFSW body and the work of all Representatives should link with the above objective, vision and work agenda of IFSW UN Commission. Representatives are requested to focus on one or two themes (such as children's rights, health...) that are relevant for global social work and coordinated within the Commission. Representatives work should also be guided by:

- *the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development,*
- the definition of social work
- the constitution of IFSW
- the ethical principles
- the IFSW policies

## **IFSW UN Commission**

The commission supports IFSW representatives and IFSW members to act as facilitators and bridging the gaps between community's aspirations and UN agendas. At the same time, the knowledge of the UN's work shall flow back to the IFSW board and the IFSW members with the goal to create a partnership and realising a social change.

### **Structure of the IFSW UN Commission**

The members of the UN Commission are:

- The IFSW UN Commissioner
- The Main Representatives that are also the Regional Commissioners
- A team of max. five Representatives per abovementioned region

The relationships between the main representatives, the local IFSW member, the IFSW UN Commissioner, the IFSW Secretary General and the Regional President are essential to coordinating and planning the representative's work. It is envisaged that there will be Skype meetings regularly or on demand (UN Commissioner, Main Rep. and regional IFSW President) so that they can have support and link their work plans. Regular contact shall be maintained from all the above-mentioned persons.



### **Task of the UN Commissioner**

- a) holds a coordination role for the IFSW Representatives to the UN
- b) participates regularly in the IFSW board meetings and provides the board with information but also networks
- c) Invites and informs IFSW President, Secretary General and board with respect to the consultation process
- d) Leads the whole election and leadership of the IFSW commission members.
- e) Maintains the IFSW website chapter of UN Work as an interactive pool, on one hand within the IFSW UN Commission and on the other hand with the IFSW Members. As soon as the IFSW website can be used as communication tool.
- f) Leads the submission of report and communication to the UN
- g) Responsible for the UN Commission budget

### **Task of the Main Representative / Regional Commissioner**

In addition to the task of IFSW Representatives to the UN (see below), the Main Representative is also the Regional Commissioner of the UN Commission. In this second role, the interaction with the IFSW regional president shall be maintained.

### **Task of the IFSW Representatives to the UN**

#### *Partnerships*

Building partnerships to work for global solidarity, with other professionals and within IFSW.

#### *Action*

Facilitating international and regional cooperation for shared learning and joint action.

#### *Policy*

Representing IFSW along the existing policy papers and ethical code. Developing ethical statements and policies that enhance best social work practice.

#### *Advocacy*

Advocating professional social work values, standards, ethics, human rights, recognition, training and working conditions.

#### *Communication with the IFSW members*

An important task is also to raise awareness of the IFSW members and mark the aims, goals and work of these UN organizations. E.g. Human and Children's Rights or ILO rec. 202 on Social Protection Floors etc. Or contribution that can be made to the Universal Periodic review, the Voluntary report during the High-Level Political Forum (review of the SDGs), country visits of Special rapporteur etc. This can be done by writing statements that can be published on the IFSW website,



communicating with the IFSW regional board, writing journal articles and other available tools. The Main Representative and the UN Commissioner shall be informed.

### *Reporting*

Every year, the Representatives have to hand in a report, describing their work during the year. This report will be used for the accreditation of IFSW and the reports for IFSW Board.

In order to achieve these objectives, IFSW representatives will use a number of approaches and procedures that available for accredited NGOs at the UN:

#### *Events*

Representative teams maybe in a position to run workshops or other events. The teams are requested to organize an event to celebrate 'Social Work Day at the UN'. These events provide an excellent opportunity to invite key audiences to partake in discussions on unique social work approaches/solutions to specific social problems. Invited audiences should be strategically targeted to further the understanding, growth and influence of the profession.

#### *Written Statements*

Written statements outlining IFSW's position on any matter are an excellent method of conveying information as they can be used for multiple audiences. The statements should explicitly contain information highlighting the social work perspective on an issue. Keeping the IFSW members informed of the activities of representatives is key to ensuring member interest and when possible drafts of written statements will be circulated to the members for their comments before final approval and submission of each statement. All written statements must be approved by the IFSW UN Commissioner and either the President or the Secretary-General before issue.

#### *Verbal Statements*

Representatives will be able to present their statements verbally and / or contribute to discussions and debates. In these instances representatives should speak in accordance with the formal policies of the Federation. When a representative has made a significant verbal contribution, ideally this would be recorded later in writing, so it may be used later in a press statement, or member information bulletin.

#### *Respond to consultations initiated by UN*

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.

#### *Building alliances*

One of the key roles of the representatives is to work outside of the formal meetings in building or joining alliances with partner NGOs to meet the above objectives.



## **Appointment of Representatives**

### **UN Commissioner**

The recruitment of the UN Commissioner has to be announced on IFSW regional and IFSW global website. The UN Commissioner will be appointed by the IFSW global board and can be re-appointed every two years.

### **The IFSW Main Representative to the UN**

The recruitment of Main Representative has to be announced on IFSW regional and global website. The IFSW Main Representative will be appointed by the IFSW UN Commissioner and the president of the IFSW regional board and can be re-appointed every four years.

### **The IFSW Representative to the UN**

Responsible for the recruitment of new representative is the local Main Representative. The appointment of Representatives is by agreement with the UN Commissioner and can be re-appointed every four years.

### **Review**

These guidelines should be reviewed every six years by the Executive for fitness for purpose.

*Written by Priska Fleischlin with support of Klaus Kühne and Rory Truell, approved by the IFSW Global Board, April 2019*

### **Source:**

Rory Truell and Priska Fleischlin (2018). Proposal for the Establishment of an IFSW UN Commission.

Rory Truell (2016). DRAFT Guidelines for IFSW Representatives.

IFSW (2016). CONSTITUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS. Adopted at the 2016 General Meeting, Seoul Korea