



## **Report on the activities of the IFSW UN Commission 2018-2020 Perspective for 2020-2022**

The General Meeting 2018 endorsed building a new commission that spans the activities of all IFSW representations to the UN Headquarters and offices. In a nutshell, during the last two years, the Commission has been extended and now has representatives in every continent. As a next step, the partnership within the commission and with UN Agencies shall be further expanded and strengthened.

The members 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)
- Normally four, but up to six, additional Representatives in each abovementioned region

### **Two years of development**

In South America, the region announced and supported Ms. Alicia Yanez Merino to represent IFSW in Santiago de Chile.

In Asia Pacific, the Regional President announced the newly established positions during the Regional Conference. In partnership the selection was made and 7 people from different countries began their role in 2019/2020 and will work mostly remotely. Ms W. Kotbungkair will now lead the team and co-organize WSWD at the UN office in Bangkok.

In Geneva, all roles are filled. The European Regional board nominated Ms. Swetha R. Dhananka who will coordinate and co-organize WSWD at the UN Headquarters, Geneva.

In Vienna, Mr. Herbert Paulischin has been nominated by the European Regional board and will lead the team in Vienna., Three positions are still vacant.

In Nairobi, Mr. Charles Mbugua is a longstanding and experienced representative. At this time, IFSW Africa is still looking for additional team members given that the UN Environment has its Headquarters in Nairobi.

In New York, one new representative has been found. IFSW is still looking for one additional representative and Mr. Michael Cronin is leading this team.

**To sum up, within the last two years, 12 new representatives have begun their roles. In total, IFSW has 20 representatives to the UN and yet still there is space for more. 5 of 6 have submitted a report.<sup>1</sup>**

### **Achievements**

Over the last months, the UN Commission has prepared the Policy Paper on the SDGs. Various exchanges across regions have taken place and Statements have been submitted or signed ( f.i. the CONGO Statement on CoVid-19).

Various connections have been established and fostered such as to the WHO, OHCHR and other NGOs. IFSW has been actively represented at the UN Habitat in Abu Dhabi, at the High Level Political Forum on the SDGs, the indigenous forum, the conference on social development, World Health Organization, ILO, Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, UNRISD and various other UN Agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.ifsw.org/ifsw-commissions/un/>



## Lesson learned

The most important lesson is: the more time people spend on representation, the stronger it is. If representatives can attend conferences more often and meet more people, the more they can liaise and advocate for Social Work. But we all have limited resources.

While it is a really rewarding volunteer position, it depends a lot on the individuals and their time, Connectivity and social recourses. Every achievement made is related to engagement – my warmest thanks to all!

Furthermore, it is essential that every representative understands IFSW, broadening their social work perspective from a national to global view. The more people who can exchange and learn about other IFSW national members, the better they can represent IFSW to the UN.

The support of the IFSW President, the IFSW Global Board and the General Secretary and its office has been critical. My warmest thanks to all of you!

## Steps ahead

The IFSW UN Commission's main focus is to promote the IFSW objectives and policies in the UN. The team has grown and so did the opportunities to partner within the Commission but also with UN Agencies.

With regard to the proposed program for the UN Commission (General Meeting 2018), phase one has been established halfway:

### ***Phase one: Building our Capacity***

Build a global team, with sub teams in each region and the UN headquarters/offices. To develop a culture of planning and sharing information, jointly developing statements, providing guidance for and acting on behalf of the IFSW members and the communities they work within.

In the next phases, the UN Commission will strengthen the collaboration among its members. Regular exchanges and coordination of activities and jointly developing statements are the proposed tools.

### ***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, establishing a social work job description, co-creating campaigns on a global, national and local level.

With regard to the phase two, the UN Commission will also working to increase the awareness, along with UN agencies, on social work– always in line with the social work definition, code of ethics and policy papers.

I am looking forward to working with this professional team and I hope that IFSW members will also profit from our work.

IFSW UN Commissioner

Priska Fleischlin, Switzerland/ June 2020