

APA Report of the NGO Representatives at the United Nations
From February to June 2008
Florence L. Denmark, Ph.D., Main Representative

Overview

The APA UN/NGO representatives continue to be active at the United Nations. The activities of our NGO representatives are listed by committee or activity, in alphabetical order, rather than by individual names of each NGO representative. However, some of the highlights for each individual representative are included below. Also included is a report about the weekly DPI Briefings and plans for Psychology Day at the United Nations.

APA Representatives

Deanna Chitayat was recently elected Vice-Chair of the NGO Committee on HIV/AIDS. Prior to her election she served as Program Chair for this committee. She also served on the Planning Committee for the DPI Conference.

Harold Cook continues to serve as the Co-Chair for the NGO Committee on the Family. In this role he Co-Chairs monthly meetings of the Family Executive committee and chairs the Program Committee. Harold also represents the family Committee and meetings of the Conference of NGOs (CONGO). He was also active on the NGO Committee for UNICEF.

Florence Denmark is in her third term as Chair for the Committee on Ageing and also serves on the Executive Committee for the Committee on Mental Health. She is coordinator for the 2nd Annual Psychology Day and is very active on the Planning Committee for the International Day of Older Persons. As chair she attends periodic meetings of CONGO. She is also a member of the Committee on the Status of Women and two of its subcommittees. One on older women (SCOW) and the other is violence against women. As a member of the NGO

Committee on Migration, she Chaired its Nominations and Elections Committee.

Corann Okorodudu provides leadership in preparation for the WCAR Durban Review in 2009. She Chairs the Subcommittee for the Elimination of Racism and is a member of the Executive Committee on Human Rights, a member of the NGO Committee on Indigenous people, a member of the NGO Committee on UNICEF and its Working Group on Girls. She is also a member of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women and the NGO Committee on Mental Health.

Janet Sigal has worked to organize the interviews and coordinate the program for selection of three student interns for the group of APA representatives to the United Nations. She is also co-Chairing the International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) to be held on October 2nd, 2008. Janet was elected and served as Secretary on the Family Committee.

Harold Takooshian is Past-Chair and continues to be active on the Human Settlements Committee. He brings many UN representatives together at meetings held on various college campuses. He organized a Panel at EPA about the UN. He is also our unofficial photographer, who takes wonderful pictures of all of us at the UN.

Associate NGO Representatives

Neal Rubin spoke about to the Illinois Psychological Association's graduate students in psychology on "Psychologists at the UN" and takes minutes for our UN meetings. He spoke at EPA about "Stress Reduction for United Nations Peacekeepers." He is also on the Planning Committee for Psychology Day.

Norma Simon is Associate Co-Chair of the International Day of Older Persons. She serves on the Trauma Working Group for the Committee on Mental Health. She serves as recorder for the open meetings of the Committee on Ageing, as well as for the meetings of the Planning Committee for Psychology Day.

All of the members and associate members are very active participants at the United Nations, attend monthly meetings of the APA team and participate in UN activities.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- APA Representatives Selected Three Student Interns. After the APA UN Team received approval to select interns for 2008-2009, **Janet Sigal** was assigned to coordinate the process. Twenty-two completed applications were received. The applications were screened according to the criteria determined by the APA Team: We would only consider applicants who were full-time students enrolled in a program and the applicants had to live in the New York City area. The APA team decided to interview one applicant on the phone (she did not meet the criteria) and seven other applicants in person. The interviews were conducted by **Janet**, along with **Florence Denmark**, **Norma Simon**, **Corann Okorodudu** and **Deanna Chitayat**. The APA team rank-ordered the candidates and decided which applicants should be offered the positions. Five "finalists" had excellent credentials, and from this group, three were selected. They are as follows: Kaori Kato and Lee Vuong, both from Yeshiva University and Rojita Abujam from New York University.
- The APA Team, along with several other NGO psychologists, prepared and submitted a program presented at APA in August, 2008. The program is entitled, "Psychology in Action at the United Nations." This program was co-sponsored by CIRP and Division 52, and took place on Friday August 15, 2008, from 9-11am. The full program is attached.
- We were approved by DPI to hold our Second Annual Psychology Day on Thursday, November 20th (we thus, will not conflict with Mental Health Day in October). This will be an all day event including a Briefing.

Department of Public Information Weekly Briefings

Members of the American Psychological Association's UN NGO Team and their Special Projects Associates frequently attend the DPI/NGO briefings in order to stay up to date with issues, to network with staff, government representatives and members of NGO's and to plan for future activities. APA representatives also organize and participate on briefing panels. The team is currently in negotiations with DPI to plan the 2nd Annual Psychology Day briefing tentatively scheduled for late November or early December, 2008.

Following the Annual DPI/NGO Conference in early September, the Department of Public Information holds weekly briefings on a fall (October – December) and spring (January – June) schedule (see the spring, 2008 schedule detailed below). Briefings are held on Thursday mornings from 10:00 am until 12:00 pm in the Dag Hammarskjold Auditorium at United Nations Headquarters in New York City. Briefing schedules, invitations to briefings and briefing summaries are posted at: www.un.org/dpi/ngosection. The briefings are open to all U.N. badge holders.

Although the structure of the briefings may vary, they most often consist of an initial video screening relevant to the topic of the day (10:00 – 10:30 am). Following the screening, a panel of experts presents on the briefing topic. The panel typically consists of a U.N. representative, a government representative and an NGO representative and is chaired by the Chief of the Department of Public Information/NGO Section. The presentation is followed by a question and answer period. The meeting concludes with an ad hoc briefing consisting of relevant announcements for the U.N. and NGO communities.

There has recently been a change in the administration of DPI. Juan Carlos Brandt has left the position of Chief. He was temporarily replaced by Sasha Goricek until Maria Luisa Chavez assumed the position of Chief of the Department of Public Information the spring.

Webcasts of the briefings are often available via the above website and for additional questions regarding the briefings, the DPI/NGO information line is (212) 963-7232.

DPI Briefing Schedule: Spring, 2008

2/14/08	Valentine's Day Flowers and Chocolates: To Give or Not to Give
2/28/08	Communicating for the Future: ICT's and the UN
3/6/08	Investing in Women and Girls
3/13-14/08	Annual DPI/NGO Programme
3/20/08	Climate Change and Its Impact on Indigenous Peoples
3/27/08	"Lest We Forget: Breaking the Silence on the Transatlantic Slave Trade"
4/3/08	Understanding and Celebrating Autism
4/10/08	Pope Benedict's Visit to the United Nations
4/24/08	The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: Prospects for the 2010 Review Conference
5/1/08	Access to Information and the Empowerment of People
5/8/08	Art Changing Attitudes Toward the Environment Seminar
5/15/08	Fathers and Families: Responsibilities and Challenges
5/22/08	Be a Better Neighbour: Prevent Elder Neglect
5/29/08	United Nations to Mark 60 Years of Peacekeeping on 29 May
6/5/08	Kick the Habit: Towards a Low Carbon Economy
6/12/08	Town Hall Meeting on the 62 nd Annual DPI/NGO Conference

NGO Committee on Ageing

The Committee on Ageing has been quite active, holding ten regular meetings on the first Thursday of the month, throughout 2007. Ten Executive Committee meetings were held on the third Wednesday of the month, plus an all day retreat meeting and other events. The breadth of COA's mission extends to creating a global awareness of the opportunities and challenges

involved with ageing. Within the UN, COA advocates for the integration of ageing into policies and programs. **Florence Denmark** is Chair of this committee.

The February 12th meeting took place during the United Nations Commission for Social Development. The program was entitled, "The Untapped Resource: Older Persons in the World of Work."

The March 6th meeting was about "Financing for Older Women's Equality & Empowerment." Speakers from the Dominican Republic, the United Kingdom and a professor from the New School for Social Research spoke at this side event.

"Urbanization & Migration: The Impact on Ageing Populations" was the topic for the April 3rd program. This was co-sponsored by the NGO Committee on Migration and occurred during the 41st Session of the UN Commission on Population and Development.

On May 1st, COA had a program entitled, "Multigenerational Perspectives among Indigenous People in a Changing World."

The final program for the season was held on June 5th, and it was entitled, "Mobilizing at the Grassroots to Promote Quality of Life for Persons of All Ages." Speakers discussed grassroots advocacy and mobilization to benefit people of all ages.

October 1st is the day set aside by the UN as the International Day of Older Persons (IDOP). Each year the Committees on Ageing in New York, Geneva, and Vienna, each hold a special program to recognize and generate awareness on issues concerning ageing. In New York, the celebration of the 18th annual UN IDOP is entitled: A Call for a Convention of Rights for Older Persons. The theme and the mission statement were developed by the IDOP Planning Committee. **Janet Sigal** is Co-Chair of IDOP. The steering committee including **Florence Denmark**, met with Dr. Sidorenko, the point person for the Ageing Committee, and **Florence Denmark** and **Janet Sigal** met with Robert Venne who is the UN point person for the IDOP.

At the present time, we have identified four of five regional speakers (from Africa, Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East) and each of these speakers was invited to participate in the IDOP, 2008. In addition, we been in contact with the speakers and requested that they send us a bio and a photo for the program. A luncheon will be held at the Delegates' Dining Room in honor of Virginia Hazzard on that day. With assistance from **Florence Denmark** and IDOP committee members, **Janet Sigal** emailed the Ambassador from Zambia to the United States and requested her presence as an honored guest at the luncheon. She has agreed to appear at the luncheon. At this point, **Janet Sigal**, **Florence Denmark**, and Co-Chair, **Norma Simon** participated in the effort to complete the invitations to regional and keynote speakers, as well as to plan other parts of the program. Other subcommittee members will be setting up online registration and helping to design the rest of the program.

Beginning in February, the IDOP Planning Committee has been meeting the first Thursday of each month. In addition, a great deal of work outside the Planning Committee has been done by the IDOP Steering Committee consisting of the two Co-Chairs, two Associate Co-Chairs (one is **Norma Simon**), and **Florence Denmark**, Chair of the Ageing Committee.

NGO Committee on Children's Rights

Follow up to the UN World Report on Violence Against Children

Following the launch of the UN World Report on Violence Against Children in 2006, a number of discussions have been held at the UN in New York, Geneva and elsewhere to clarify and publicize the findings and recommendations as an important basis for implementing them. As part of this worldwide effort, **Corann Okorodudu** made a presentation at the Annual APA Convention held in San Francisco on "The UN World Report on Violence Against Children: Contributions of Psychology" in a Symposium on GLOBAL ASPECTS OF VIOLENCE – FOCUS ON THE UNITED NATIONS. The symposium was moderated by **Florence Denmark**. Continuing her work on this issue, **Corann** attended a Panel Discussion on the Recommendations of the UN Study on Violence Against Children organized by the Permanent Missions of Brazil and Sweden in cooperation with Save the Children on October 18, 2007. The Panel included Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, Independent Expert for the UN Study on Violence Against Children, Ms Hilde F. Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Dominique Pierre Plateau, regional Advisor on Prevention of Child Abuse and Exploitation, Save the Children Sweden, South East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office, and Mr. Gerardo Sauri, Executive Director, Red por los Derechos de la Infancia, Mexico.

Activities at the GA High Level Plenary to Review the World Fit For Children+5

On December 11 and 12, 2007, the UN General Assembly held a plenary meeting to review progress on the goals and strategies which governments committed themselves at the 27th Special Session of the GA in May 2002, toward creating A World Fit For Children (WFFC). The session brought together governments, UN agencies, NGOs and other civil society organizations, and children to review progress on the WFFC Plan of Action in four outcome areas: Promoting healthy lives; Combating HIV/AIDS; Providing Quality Education; and Protecting Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Violence. It consisted of three plenary sessions, two thematic roundtables, a Children's Forum, and side events convened by NGOs, member states and UN agencies.

A report entitled "Progress for Children" released by UNICEF during the conference assesses progress made towards the Millennium Development Goals. "Progress for Children" finds that important advances in child survival and school enrolment have been made, but major challenges in health, AIDS prevention and other areas critical to the well-being of children remain. The meeting ended with the adoption of a new Declaration on Children which reaffirms the commitments laid out five years ago. While encouraged by progress achieved since 2002, the Declaration recognizes that many challenges remain, the greatest of which is eradicating poverty. It calls for "a scaled-up, cross-sectoral response by governments, increased international partnerships, and regional and national initiatives.

Through **Corann Okorodudu's** work on several NGO committees, she contributed to the WFFC+5 in the following ways:

1. As a member of the NGO Committee on UNICEF Working Group on Girls, the Sub-Committee for the Elimination of Racism, and the NGO Committee on Children's Rights, she worked on a Task Force that planned a side event held on December 11 entitled "Toward a World Fit for Girls: Confronting Modern Day Slavery, which she co-Moderated with Yvonne Rafferty.
2. As a member of the same groups, she helped to edit a brochure entitled "A Just & Equitable World for Girls", and a statement for distribution to governments and NGOs.

3. As a member of the NGO Committee on Mental Health, she served as a panelist at a program on December 13, on “Commemorating the World Fit For Children+5: Placing Mental health & Psychosocial Well-Being for Children on the UN Agenda. Her presentation focused on “The Convention on the Rights of the Child as a Framework for Integrating Mental Health and Psychosocial Well-Being into Creating a World Fit for Children. In my presentation, she pointed out that five years after the 2002 Special Session on Children, approximately 120 countries and territories have prepared reports on the progress of their efforts to meet the goals of the Special Session. However, both the Secretary-General’s Report of overall progress and especially the Statistical Review for the Report based on these national reports reflect very little attention to children’s rights to psychosocial well-being and mental health. On the same panel, Amanda Melville of UNICEF, one of the co-authors along with Psychologist Michael Wessells, introduced the ‘Interagency Steering Committee Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings” (2007), which educate humanitarian workers, UN personnel, community leaders, and professional about multilayered psychosocial support to children and families called for especially in emergencies.

NGO Development Committees

The Conference on NGOs (CONGO), formed in 1948, is composed of 30+ committees--7 in Vienna, 10 in Geneva, and 22 in New York City--described at www.ngocongo.org/committees. Starting in spring 2008, the newly-elected President **Liberato Bautista** promises more coordinated CONGO activities. Of the 22 committees in New York, 5 focus on issues of “development,” a few of them working in tandem with a funded UN agency or program: (1) **Financing for Development**, currently semi-active, deals with funding and private-sector partnerships. (2) **Human Settlements** (CHS) works since 1987 with UN Habitat (headquartered in Nairobi) (www.unhabitat.org) on issues of shelter, housing, water, and urban-rural life, described at www.ngochs.org. (3) **Population and development** is currently inactive. (4) **Social development** is also semi-active, working with the UN Commission on Social Development, on problems of poverty, hunger, education, disease, HIV. (5) **Sustainable development** is very active (www.unngocsd.org), working since 1992 with the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD, headquartered in Zimbabwe) (www.un.org/esa/sustdev), UN Environment Program (UNEP), UN Development Program (UNDP) and other agencies, on issues of population, environment, climate, island nations, waste management, pollution, water.

These 5 development committees vary widely in their productivity. The stand-out is CSD, which has adopted a formal two-year cycle to target specific goals, develop means to implement and then monitor them—focusing on issues of sanitation and climate change for 2008. On May 5-16 in NYC, CSD-16 was a 12-day forum of scheduled hearings and events, <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/review.htm>. In contrast, CHS has no funding, and a flaccid relation with the local Habitat office, which held a one-day forum on “Sustainable urbanization” on 23 April 2008. Though the missions of these 5 development committees all involve easily-overlooked issues of human behavior, psychologists have been active in just one-- the Committee on Human Settlements--with two psychological scientists now elected as leaders—**Peter Walker** (board member) and **Harold Takooshian** (chair).

In spring 2008, CHS again hosted its monthly series of public lectures, including one psychological scientist (**Arline Bronzaft** on urban noise). CHS plans are slow for the DPI conference in Paris this September and World Urban Forum 4 in Nanjing this November.

NGO Committee on the Family

Harold Cook is the Co-Chair of the NGO Committee on the Family, wherein he Co-Chairs the Executive Committee. In his role as Co-Chair of the Committee, Harold also Co-Chairs the monthly general meetings of the Family Committee, as well as chairing the Program Committee, wherein he takes a very active role and is responsible for planning, organizing and arranging speakers for monthly substantive panel presentations, as well as the special side events and workshops presented at meetings of UN Commissions and Conferences. These substantive meetings are sometimes in collaboration with other UN/NGO Organizations. Harold also represents the NGO Committee on the Family at meetings of the Chairs at the Conferences of NGOs (CONGO).

Janet Sigal is the Recording Secretary of the Committee. She is on the Statements subcommittee and the Membership and Outreach subcommittee of the Executive Committee. As such, she worked on statements from the Family Committee which were revised and then submitted to be read at the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Social Development. In each case, the importance of including and considering the family was emphasized.

On February 7, 2008, the Family Committee co-sponsored a side event for the Commission for Social Development with the Committee on Migration and the Health Committee. It was titled: "The Impact of Migration on Health and Families." This side event was moderated by Dr. Rachel Ravich of the Health Committee and Dr. Eva Sandis of the Family Committee. A discussion was held on the potential problems for migrants, including increased stress, possible injuries, increased domestic violence and poor working conditions. The ways in which migration affects one's social networks and health were also described.

For the Commission on the Status of Women, the Family committee jointly sponsored a workshop: 'Actions for the Advancement of Women: Best Practices,' Thursday, February 28th, 2008.

For the Commemoration of the Special Session on Children, "The World Fit for Children Plus Five," the Family Committee organized a side event: "Innovative Interventions Related to Nutrition for Vulnerable Children and Families" and also endorsed the aforementioned report that was a response to the status of WFCPF and was on the UNICEF website for several months.

In addition to the above, several panels were held for the general meetings of the committee. On March 27, 2008, the Family Committee held a meeting on: "Religious Perspectives on the Family and Tolerance", moderated by **Harold Cook** and Eva Sandis. Perspectives on family life were contributed from the Jewish, Buddhist and Muslim viewpoints. Other general meetings focused on such topics as, "The Media's Impact on Children and Families," "The Father's Roles and Responsibilities: Challenges and Opportunities," and "Challenges and Opportunities for Children and Families in Developing Countries affected by HIV/AIDS."

Finally, on May 22, the Family Committee held a meeting discussing the year's activities and suggestions for the future. One suggestion made by **Harold Cook** and Eva Sandis was a joint meeting with Ageing on December 4, and a joint meeting of Family, SCOW and the Migration Committee in November.

The Family Committee helped organize and recently submitted a proposal for a side event at the upcoming 2008 DPI Annual Conference on the commemoration of the UN Declaration on Human Rights to be held in Paris in September, 2008. The title of the proposed side event is: 'Protecting the Human Rights of Migrants and Their Families to Promote Development: Challenges and Strategies'.

NGO Committee on HIV/AIDS

The purpose of the NGO Committee on HIV/AIDS is to address issues within the UN related to the epidemic, advocating for global action and expanded response to prevention, transmission, provision of care and support, reducing vulnerability of individuals, e.g. orphans, and communities, and reducing stigma.

NGO HIV/AIDS is a relatively new committee, still trying to sort out a direction. This spring, through **Deanna Chitayat's** initiative and guidance, the committee devoted itself to self evaluation. Members participated in a facilitated discussion based on individual and organization goals, interests and backgrounds. The main point derived from the discussion, which continued for three successive monthly meetings, was that the NGO HIV/AIDS Committee would focus on three themes for the following year: Advocacy, Education and Awareness Raising These were further expanded, related activities defined (see appendix) and committees formed. Although this effort took a lot of time, without this basic structure the committee was floundering.

As a first step towards networking and communicating with other NGO's, the Committee hosted a very successful reception which attracted over 100 attendees of the High Level Meeting: Uniting the World Against AIDS.

The HIV/AIDS Committee was preoccupied by the High Level Meeting on AIDS. Based on reports by 147 member states on their national progress, The Secretary General concluded that progress is evident in many regions, reflecting a return on investment, but progress is uneven and the expansion of the epidemic is outstripping the pace of increased services. The conference focused on universal access to treatment and services.

On June 12th, the CONGO Committees: HIV/AIDS, Family, Children's Rights, NGO/UNICEF sponsored a panel on HIV/AIDS with speakers from Africa. Many of the panelists in this and other meetings noted the great need for psychosocial services for those affected by the epidemic. **Deanna Chitayat** has made contact with some of these speakers and will try to organize a conversation with APA office on AIDS.

Deanna Chitayat was elected Vice-Chair of the NGO HIV/AIDS Committee for the 2008-2009 year.

NGO Committee on Human Rights Subcommittee on the Elimination of Racism

Corann Okorodudu gave a presentation at the Annual Convention of the APA in August 2007 on UN Actions and our NGO Advocacy on Darfur at the UN as one of four panelists in a CIRP Symposium on Darfur, chaired by Thema Bryant Davis.

On October 18, 2007, the Sub-Committee for the Elimination of Racism held a session at the UN on "The Role of Religion in Overcoming Xenophobia and Building Peace: Promising Practices in the Framework of Human Rights". The program was another one of our successful annual observance of the Season of Sacred Feasts of various religious groups.

In November 2007, **Corann Okorodudu** had a networking meeting with Ms. Ariel Bowen of the Jamaican Mission who covers human rights issues on the Third Committee of the GA. She was briefed about follow-up activities for the commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the preparation for the follow-up to the Durban World Conference Against Racism in 2009.

General Assembly Resolution for Review of Progress on Combating Racism

In November 2006, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to convene in 2009 a conference to review progress on the Declaration and Programme of Action of the 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism, held in Durban, South Africa. Apart from assessing progress, the purpose of the conference is to consider further actions for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance – not to renegotiate the Durban Declaration and Program of Action. In view of the contentious nature of debate over the 2001 conference, a number of concerns have arisen regarding the 2009 review conference: (1) The Preparatory Committee for the conference is chaired by Libya and includes Cuba, Iran, Indonesia and other countries with highly questionable records on human rights. However, it also includes other states such as Norway, Belgium, and Estonia. (2) Islamic countries have been campaigning for objectives (such as enumerating different forms of racism) that would reopen the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and introduce an Islamic agenda into the review conference. (3) There is also deep concern that the anti-Semitism that erupted especially in the NGO Forum in 2001 will be repeated.

Israel, which along with the US walked out of the 2001 Durban conference, has been trying to convince Western countries not to fund the \$4.6 billion UN budget including funding for the conference. Canada has already withdrawn from the conference. Amidst these dynamics, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, has been named as the Secretary-General of the Conference.

An organizational session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2009 Review Conference was held August 27-31, 2007 and a first substantive session is scheduled from April 21 to May 2, 2008 in Geneva, to be followed by second and third substantive session before the conference in 2009 at a location yet to be determined.

The NGO Sub-Committee for the Elimination of Racism is working with the NGO Committee on Human Rights and the New York Office for the Commission on Human Rights on planning for the 2009 conference.

APA's Representation in the Durban II Review

APA was represented at the 2001 WCAR by a delegation approved by the APA Board of Directors, which also approved a resolution against racism used as the basis of the delegation's advocacy at the conference, with coordination by CIRP and CEMA. Following the return of the delegation from the conference, some members of the APA Council of Representatives raised strongly felt concerns about the delegation's role in response to anti-Semitism at the conference as why, in fact, the delegation did not leave the conference when Israel and the US walked out. This reaction was based in confusing the UN WCAR (a conference of governments) to which APA was accredited with the NGO Forum in which NGOs met separately from government representatives and in which anti-Semitism was expressed in Durban. CIRP is aware of the resolution of this issue by a Task Force on the WCAR whose report can be found at the APA website. That report recommended three resolutions that have been developed and approved by the COR: on Anti-Semitism, Prejudice, and Religious Bias.

The majority of the APA/UN representatives were opposed to APA representation, but given the amount of work APA has done and is continuing on racism, CIRP may want to recommend that APA be represented at the 2009 Durban Review conference, including the preparatory meetings preceding it. If so, the documentation of the Task Force on the WCAR and the APA Delegation's report should be an important basis for its recommendations.

NGO Committee on Indigenous Peoples

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The UN General Assembly's adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on September 13, 2007 marked the end of a journey of more than 30 years. It was a day of celebration for indigenous leaders and their rank and file scattered around the globe, united in a common fate of conquest, dispossession, marginalization and neglect.

NGO Committee on Mental Health

The Mental Health Committee of the NGO organizations at the UN meets on the second Thursday of every month. This year is a major election year and there were 9 positions open. Several consultations occurred among the Nominating Committee members prior to us setting up a slate to be voted on at the next Mental Health meeting. As stated in the last report, **Florence Denmark**, chair of the APA UN team, is on the executive committee of the Mental Health Committee. The meetings are divided into two parts: 1), the workgroups meet for an hour 1 -2. **Florence Denmark and Janet Sigal** continue to attend the workgroup on gender, **Corann Okorodudu**, the workgroup on Human Rights, and **Norma Simon**, the workgroup on Trauma. Each of the workgroups is responsible for arranging one of the meetings for the general meeting. 2), the general meeting of the committee meets from 2-4. These meetings are well attended and offer an exceptional array of information and interest.

Mental Health Day, October 10th, is celebrated each year at the UN, on the nearest Thursday, with special programming and speakers. These are open to the wider community.

The hope of this group, as with all of the NGO committees, is to have an influence on the corresponding commission of the UN. UN personnel regularly speak to the NGO committees and have an on-going working relationship with them.

The February meeting of the committee was entitled ***Mental Health at Risk on Two Fronts: The Global workplace and the Iraqi refugee Crisis***. The speakers were Werner Obermeyer; Deputy to the Executive Director, Senior External Relations Officer; World Health Organization (WHO) Office at the United Nations, NY. Who gave the introduction. Gaston Harnois, M.D., Director of the Montreal WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Mental Health and Associate Professor of Psychiatry at McGill University who spoke on ***Mental Health in the Global Workplace: Perspectives from WHO***; and Clare Nolan, UN NGO Representative, Congregation of Sisters of the Good Shepard and a LSW WHO spoke on ***Mental Health: An Unmet Need among Iraqi Refugees in the Mid East***.

The March meeting was on a very different topic: ***Investing in Women's Mental Health: Reaping the benefits***. The moderators for this were Ricki Kantrowitz, UN Representative, World Federation for Mental Health and Professor at Westfield State College in MA. Ricki is a psychologist and has worked closely with the APA team. Karen Siegel, UN representative, Zonta International. The speakers were Laura Lederer WHO spoke on ***Mental Health Needs of Trafficked Women: Addressing the issues***. She is the Senior Director for Global Projects, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, United States Department of State.

Sondra Leftoff; Associate Professor of Psychology, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY spoke on ***Legacy of Violence Against Navajo Women: contemporary Conflicts about funding and Treatment approaches*** Zelná Oosthuis; UN NGO Representative, Congregation of Sisters of the Good Shepard spoke on ***Advancing Women and Girl's Mental Health: A South African***

NGO's Journey and Maryam H. Mohamed, Executive Officer, Women advancement Initiative, Kenya spoke on **Advancing Women and Girl's Mental Health: A Kenyan NGO's Journey..**

This meeting was held at the time of the Women's Commission of the UN.

The April meeting was on **Global Well Being and the Media in conjunction with the Working Group on Media /Information, Communications Technologies and Mental Health** and co-sponsored with The communications Coordination Committee for the United Nations (CCC/UN) The moderator was Dr. Elizabeth Carll, a well known psychologist and UN Representative from the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies. She made the introductions. The keynote presentation was given by H.E. Ismat Jahan, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN, Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne the NGO Keynote speaker who was Founder and President of Sarvodaya, Sri Lanka's largest charitable NGO , Bill Lichtenstein, President and Senior Executive Producer, LCMedia WHO produced "The Infinite Mind" and was a former ABC TV news producer, Sarah Jackson-Han, of Media Relations Director, Radio Free Asia and columnist for "Healthcare Today" - England, and last, but very interesting Kristen Saloomay, Al Jazeera TV.

This was an enlightening program that spoke to the importance of covering issues of mental health in the media, the differences in various parts of the world and the difficulties in bringing important information to the publics.

The May meeting was titled **Reflections on Education for Human rights and Mental Health** and was presented in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the UN in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The moderator for the program was the co-chair of the Mental Health Committee, Dr. Janice Wood Wetzel. She introduced the speakers and led the discussion. The speakers were Craig Mokhiber, Deputy Director, NY Office UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN, Angela M. Keiser, Coordinator of Special Projects, Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition of The Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area studies of Yale University, Margrit Wreschner Rustrow, Ph.D. convener, working group on Refugees, Immigrants and Mental Health, and Judith Bograd Gordon, Ph.D., Co-Convenor, working group on Racism, Related Intolerances and Mental Health She is a UN Representative, International Council of Women and Lecturer at Yale School of Medicine .

The program concentrated on ways to realize "Human Rights for All" in the 21st century by highlighting the relationship between Education for Human Rights and Mental Health.

The mental Health Committee also co-sponsors and cooperates with many other NGO committees at the United Nations.

At the Trauma workgroup, Dr InkaWeissbecker, a co-chair of the workgroup, brought us up to date on the Climate Change issues. There is a book being written and Dr. Weissbecker is writing a chapter on Mental Health issues brought about by climate change. She has recently sent the draft to the working group. **Norma Simon** had agreed to work on an edit of the chapter and has done so.

NGO Committee on Migration

In addition to the joint Migration Committee meetings mentioned above, an additional meeting was co-sponsored by Ageing and Migration on April 3, 2008. The speakers included Jorge Bravo, the Focal Point on Ageing and Chief of the Population and Development Division, DESA, of the United Nations. Rosa Perla Resnick, Chair of the Committee on Migration also spoke and Ruth

Finkelstein, Vice President for Health Policy, Division of Health Policy, NY Academy of Medicine spoke about Age-Friendly Cities. Dr. Bravo spoke about urbanization and the changing age structures in the world and how it affects the ageing population. Although some aspects of urbanization are positive, there will be challenges of ageing populations on economic demographics, social –and –family living arrangements and political voting patterns. There will probably be greater changes in less developed countries. Dr. Resnick and Dr. Finkelstein talked about Global and NY in terms of Age-Friendly Cities. Dr. Finkelstein suggested that we think globally and act locally. The WHO Checklist of Features of Age-Friendly Cities was described, including good outdoor seating, pavements for pedestrians and cycle paths separate from pedestrian walkways. In addition, public transportation should be reliable, frequent, and all areas and services should be accessible. Other features include affordable and safe housing, social participation opportunities, respect and inclusion for older persons, good communication and information systems, and effective community and health services.

The Migration Committee is also preparing for the Global Forum on Migration and Development meeting in Manila in October. A meeting was held to discuss the preparations.

Florence Denmark was Chair of the Nomination and Election Committee for the NGO Committee on Migration.

Social Development Commission

The Commission on Social Development met from February 6 to 13, 2008. In preparation for this session, **Corann Okorodudu** coordinated, drafted, and submitted a Statement on the Theme of “Full Employment and Decent Work for All.” She also obtained APA and SPSSI approval to be primary sponsors of the statement, which had more than 20 NGO sign-ons and can be found on the website for the Commission on Social Development.

The Committee on the Status of Women (CSW)

The Committee, composed of NGO's, fosters dialogue on issues debated at the UN to promote policies favorable to women. Most of the year is devoted towards the build-up to the 10 day meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, referred to below as “the Commission.” Composed of 45 nations, the Commission's priority theme in 2008 was “Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.” The secondary theme was “Women and Peace”.

The NGO/CSW provides a parallel structure to the Commission seeking to support it and to involve NGO's worldwide. One month prior to the Commission the NGO/CSW invites Commission members to roundtables where elite panelists review the issues. **Deanna Chitayat participated** in organizing the first Roundtable: “Women at the Table: Financing for Gender Equality” the other Roundtable focused on “Women and Peace talks: Meeting the Challenge.” See appendix for description.

Other activities involve registering and preparing the over 2500 NGO representatives visiting the Commission to participate in the theme. A consultation day is devoted to information and education. Throughout the subsequent 10 days, there are networking events, caucuses, briefings, 180 parallel events (panels by and for NGO representatives) advocacy activities, fund raising, craft fairs, and publications, all of which are organized by the planning committee. What was the outcome of all this effort?

The purpose of the Commission was to negotiate a set of agreed conclusions within the 10 day period. There is no way to adequately summarize the agreed conclusions of the Commission, but we will attempt to paint with a broad stroke. The Commission reaffirmed all the related conventions, i.e. treaties and declarations, including the Beijing Declaration, which emphasized political commitment to make financial and human resources available for the empowerment of women. Also included: gender mainstreaming, human rights, feminization of poverty, under-funding of UN agencies working on gender equality, increased investment for gender equality, poverty eradication strategies, gender mainstreaming in national economic policies, participation of women in political, economic decision making, strengthening accountability mechanisms for women's advancement, allocating resources for capacity building, funding the collection and dissemination of sex and age disaggregated data, women entrepreneurship, bank loans, workplace discrimination, employment, HIV/AIDS, armed conflict, and so on.

At the US Caucus during the Commission, several of us pressured missions to include the words "women of all ages," so that the needs of older women and girls would be included. The effort succeeded partially in that "women and girls" were included and "data disaggregated for age" appeared in one section.

The statement of agreed conclusions is excellent, but political will is necessary for implementation.

Outreach

Our ideal APA team role at the U.N. is to foster two-way communication: (a) psychologists to UN issues, and (b) UN issues to psychologists. To perform the latter role, our APA team has developed an outreach to psychologists, by coordinating with a few other APA groups: OIA (and its newsletter), APA Division 52 (and its local NY group of 270), and APA Division 9 (and its local group of 500). In spring 2008, after UN Psychology Day on 10-11 October 2007: (1) we hosted a full day of six international symposia at the 2008 EPA meeting in Boston in March (www.easternpsychological.org), with more for August 2008 at APA in Boston and March 2009 at EPA in Pittsburgh. (2) We prepared a few reports for *Psychology International*, including student internships (Takooshian & Campano, 2008) and publishing (Takooshian & Gielen, 2008). (3) To complement DPI in Paris this September, we are arranging a fifth international psychology gathering on September 18 in NYC, to precede the second Psychology Day at the UN (4) We include UN activities in several of our NYC international gatherings (described in Takooshian & Velayo, 2006).

References

- H. Takooshian & R. S. Velayo (2006, Dec.). Forming a local group of international psychologists: Why and how? *Psychology International*, 17 (4), 21-23.
- H. Takooshian & F. Campano (2008, May). How can students become involved in U.N. work? *Psychology International*, 19 (2), 5-6.
- H. Takooshian & U. P. Gielen (2008, May). Workshop on publishing at the United Nations. *Psychology International*, 19 (2), 6.

Psychology Day at the United Nations

Based on the success of last year's Psychology Day at the United Nations, DPI has approved a Second Annual Psychology Day to be held on November 20th, 2008. **Neal Rubin** co-authored, with **Florence Denmark**, a proposal to DPI on the theme of Social Justice for Psychology Day. We will have a DPI Briefing in the morning, followed by three Panels in the afternoon. The theme of the day will be "Psychology and Social Justice in the UN's Global Agenda." Herbert Kelman has agreed to be the speaker in the morning Briefing. Other speaker will include someone from the Missions and someone from the United Nations. They will be selected by the Department of Public Information. The theme of social justice will be carried out in the three afternoon panels, tentatively titled, "Climate Change," "Psychologists' Contribution to Poverty Reduction," and "Psychological Contributions to the Prevention of the Abuse of Power." Following the afternoon program we will hold a reception, as we did last year. We hope to attract members from the Missions, UN people, as well as psychologists and psychology students to attend this program.

APA 2008 Convention: Symposium Psychology in Action at the United Nations

Psychologists have been representatives to the United Nations for many years. As part of the work accomplished this year, the first ever Psychology Day was held at the United Nations on October 10th and 11th. The participants included psychologists from many NGOs at the United Nations, spearheaded by the American Psychological Association. Invited speakers also took part. We plan on making this an annual event, and hope it will become international, as well. This panel will discuss the diverse role of psychology at the United Nations. More specifically it will review Psychology Day, as well as reflect on the international nature of the psychological work, and outline future goals regarding what still needs be accomplished between psychology and the United Nations.

The panelists included:

Chair: Florence Denmark, Pace University, NY

Harold Takooshian, Ph.D. and Siroon Shahinian, Ph.D. - "A Brief History of Psychologists at the UN" (Fordham University, NY)

Deanna Chitayat, Ph.D. - "Diary of a Psychologist at the UN: Effecting Policy"
Hofstra University, NY (retired)

Janet Sigal, Ph.D. and Inka Weissbecker, Ph.D. - "Bridging the Gap between Psychology and the United Nations" (Fairleigh Dickinson University, Teaneck, NJ and University of Louisville, KY)

Ricki Kantrowitz, Ph.D. - "A General Discussion of Psychology Day"
Westfield State College, MA

Elizabeth Carll, Ph.D. - "Including Mental Health Information into UN Initiatives and Policy"
(Independent Practice, Huntington, NY)

Corann Okorodudu, Ph.D. - "Reciprocal Impact between APA Policies and UN Human Rights Advocacy" (Rowan State University)

Discussants: Neal Rubin, Ph.D., Illinois School of Professional Psychology
Norma Simon, Ed.D. ABPP, Independent Practice (retired)