



58<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women  
United Nations Headquarters  
March 8 – 21, 2014  
Brenda L. G. Smith, UN Representative

Madam World President, World Vice President, World Officers, Members of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women:

It is with a grateful heart that I extend my appreciation for the opportunity to serve as this organization's main Representative to the United Nations. In particular, for the past two weeks, Matilda Johnson, President of the West Africa Area, and I served as your delegates to the Commission on the Status of Women 58. The **priority theme** for this year (2014) was "Challenges and Achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls.

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women. It is the principal global policy-making body. Every year, representatives of member states gather at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide. Specifically, this year representatives gathered to evaluate the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls and to negotiate agreed conclusions (new policy recommendations) to accelerate the implementation of existing commitments, including those listed by the Beijing Platform for Action. The **review theme** was access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work (agreed conclusions from the 55<sup>th</sup> session) and the emerging issues is "Women's access to productive resources."

During a very comprehensive orientation organized by Ecumenical Women, we were privileged to hear from the UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka who provided significant information regarding the work of UN women and challenged us to move from commitment to action. In addition to four evening sessions on advocacy, individuals were requested to meet with their diplomatic representatives, and mission visits were held, including the United States Mission.

For the fourth year, the WFMUCW joined with members of Ecumenical Women (EW) in the preparation and presentation of a joint statement to the Commission. I am delighted to note that Ecumenical Women had the opportunity to present, in person, to the Commission during the second week of CSW 58. Among numerous significant points, we noted that "throughout history, the lives of women and girls have been impacted by those who make decisions on their behalf. Today, the world's powers continue Report of the United Nations Representative

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to operate in ways that seek to protect the powerful. As the EW statement says, faith-based organizations have played an important role in the implementation of the MDGs, providing a unique vision of our achievements and the challenges still ahead. While EW realizes the MDGs are well-intentioned, we also realize they remain treatments rather than the cure.”

The WFMUCW area officers and their members are to be commended for the difference they are making in not only addressing, but in the implementation of the MDGs, particularly as they relate to the needs of women and girls. I extend my thanks to our Tree of Life Editor, Dorothy Kumar, for sharing the amazing stories and activities of our members, which we have been requested to share with the Department of Public Information (DPI) and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). We continue to share the stewardship of our members around the world and the work of our distinguished World President, Mrs. Ann Connan, which has been viewed by many on both the Ecumenical Women’s website and in our annual report to the Department of Public Information (DPI).

There were numerous events in which Matilda and I participated during the two-week session. In particular, Matilda was invited to present during a side event at the Church Center for the United Nations (CCUN). The event titled “Strategies for Enhancing Women’s Political Participation: The Role of Education in Capacity Building.” This workshop was sponsored by the Women’s Consortium of Nigeria Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Nigerian African Women’s Alliance, Inc. Millennium Development Goals Global Watch. Her presentation drew a thunderous applause and she was complimented numerous times following the presentation. She was also invited to present at other events, including our worship services. We were very proud of the contributions Matilda made during CSW 58. I would be remiss if I did not note that we truly missed the involvement of our former World Vice President, Mia Adjali. She has been of great assistance in helping to orient me to the work of the United Nations. For her encouragement and support, I remain grateful.

In addition to serving on the EW leadership team of EW, I was invited to plan two worship services. Additionally, each organization had an opportunity to plan a worship service during the two-week period, and we chose to focus our morning devotions on the individual Millennium Development Goals, and organizations were asked to explore how each of the MDGs has an impact on women and girls, through the use of Bible passages from both the Old and the New Testament. The WFMUCW was asked to prepare a worship service that would address MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases. We extend our special thanks to Mrs. Ruth Stevens, President, Women’s Home and Overseas Missionary Society of the A.M.E. Zion Church, New York, members of the Methodist Church, the A.M.E. Church and other member organizations of the World Federation for this marvelous worship experience. A copy of the program is attached. It was such a great pleasure to have the opportunity to prepare the closing worship service, which was a worship experience about which many are still talking. To God, I give all the glory and thank the newly appointed Chaplain of the Church Center for the United Nations,

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Reverend Dionne Boissiere and the chair of the Ecumenical Worship Team, Carol Schneider of the Lutheran Church, for their support and assistance. A copy of the program is also attached to this report.

“Since its inception in 1946, the UN Commission on the Status of Women meets annually for a period of ten working days to “evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete recommendations to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide. The primary outcome of the Commission is a set of “agreed conclusions” which contain an analysis of the annual priority theme as well as concrete recommendations for governments, intergovernmental bodies, and civil society to implement at the international, national, regional, and local levels. The first draft of the agreed conclusions is ready approximately one week before the meeting. The language and wording of the agreed conclusions are discussed, debated, and decided upon during the second week of the Commission. Organizations such as Ecumenical Women and other civil society participants have ten days to suggest language (words, sentences, etc.) for governments to propose for discussion and inclusion in the final document.”

After many long hours, CSW adopted agreed conclusions on the priority theme. An unedited version can be found on the UN website (CSW 58). An unedited version is also attached to this report.

As your UN Representative, I can assure you that the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women is working diligently to make its presence known throughout the NGO and UN community. Our officers and members have demonstrated that we are working to make a difference in the lives of the disenfranchised through its work in the implementation of the MDGs.

Future Theme: 59<sup>th</sup> Session 2015

“The 59<sup>th</sup> session of the CSW will take place at UN headquarters in New York around 9-20 March 2015. During this time, the Commission will undertake a review of progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 20 years after its adoption at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Among other issues to be addressed, the session will also address current challenges that affect the implementation of the Platform for Action, as well as opportunities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda.

This is a brief report of our involvement during CSW 58.