



Founded 1964

N-Mara

Newsletter of the National Council of Women - Malta



Members of


**International Council
of Women**

Founded 1888

Motto: "Do unto others as ye would
that they should do unto you."


**European Centre of the
International Council of Women**

Founded 1961

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Front Cover Photos

*International Women's Day
Roundtable Discussion at
Pinto Band Club Qormi*

*IWD Celebration Mass at
St Patrick's Church Sliema*

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Founded 1964

Il-Mara

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN - MALTA

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EDITORIAL

Dear Colleagues and Friends

We welcome you to the first quarterly issue of Il-Mara for the year 2018. Many important events took place during these past months and we take this opportunity to share them with you.

The Annual General Meeting took place at the end of January 2018 where a number of resolutions concerning current and future issues were approved by the General Assembly. These will be sent to the relevant authorities and also published in our newsletter. These resolutions are compiled with the help of our affiliated organisations.

Since 2010 NCW has been recommending the importance of a sexual health education programme. Today we realize that such a programme should cater for all levels, primary, secondary and tertiary to ensure it reflects the changes and developments of Malta's society. Young people need to be encouraged to develop self-respect, personal and social skills and the ability to choose wisely in critical moments of their life with responsibility for their actions in matters that concern both their life and that of others.

International Women's Day was celebrated on March 8th with the theme #PressforProgress. This year there was a strong call to motivate and unite friends, colleagues and whole communities to think, act and be truly gender inclusive. In Spain, millions of women workers marked International Women's Day with an extraordinary strike targeting gender inequality and sexual discrimination. Spanish women joined street protests across Spain under the slogan "If we Stop the World stops"

NCW participated in many IWD events organized in Malta on this special day. The



Council marked this special day with a seminar on the theme of #PressforProgress in Education, Politics and Health together with the *Kummissjoni Qalbisti San Sebastjan* at the Pinto Band Club Qormi.

As in previous years, NCW organized a Mass dedicated to women from all walks of life, bringing together members and

friends to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women and at the same time pray for peace and equality in today's society. The Mass was held at St. Patrick's Church in Sliema. (See page 5 for Rev. Fr. Joe Cini's full homily)

The sixty-second session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from the 12th to the 23rd March 2018. The challenges and opportunities to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls were high on the agenda. Participation of women in the media and ITC and their impact on the advancement and empowerment of women were also discussed. A detailed report is included in this issue.

Through NCW's awareness of societal emerging needs, both at National and EU level, the Council is striving to look ahead at the rapid changes brought about by digitalization and how we can proactively address the challenges that will affect our society in the near future

Once again we bring you an issue full of information, which we hope you will enjoy reading, as much as we have enjoyed putting it together.

Marie Demicoli
Editorial Board

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President's Message

Dear Ladies,

Here we are again with spring knocking on our doors and flowers blooming in the countryside. I have noticed that this year the mimosas have kept in flower and it's a spectacular sight to see so many of them brightening up the sides of roads with their amazing yellow colour. I think the trees have somehow persisted more this year, just as many of us are persisting in our work in all sectors to achieve equality. This year has been an incredibly busy one during the International Women's Day. This year's theme 'PRESS FOR PROGRESS' is a reminder to us all, that we must continually press for progress with our leaders and society – keep the momentum through persistence until equality is reached

Several events were organised this year as part of International Women's Day and which related to different topics. The most actual ones being the Gender Pay Gap, the necessity of having more women in Parliament, the launch of the observatory on femicide, women in managerial positions, women in ICT, the necessity of quotas and so on. It is also paramount however to celebrate the achievements and accept the fact, that changes do not happen overnight. We must keep insisting and put pressure for progress. I believe, that at some point, hopefully in the very near future, there will be a snowball effect which will accelerate the present slow walk in accomplishing these goals.

The discussion about abortion keeps cropping up and personally I cannot understand what abortion has to do with Sexual Health. To me, sexual Health starts with education and continues with more education.

Why is it that we seem to always find end of pipe solutions rather than preempt a possible problem and mitigate it before it happens. Why is it that we tell our girls that you can become pregnant if you do not have safe sex, but fail to educate them and inform them about sexually transmitted diseases and advise them about all the other consequences. Abortion is not a solution. We as a country are always being criticised that abortion is not available in Malta, and women have limited rights. We want to keep it that way as results from surveys have shown. I was particularly shocked hearing a female university student say that at university if you are not in favour of abortion, then you are not a feminist. To me this is peer pressure and not at all just on the young women who are being overwhelmed by the lack of respect for the basic human right.

And on this note ladies I conclude. I hope you will enjoy reading the information we are presenting in this newsletter. I ask you to please keep your eyes and ears open, as there might be a woman who might need your helping hand. If you cannot help her refer her to someone who can or just give her our telephone number, so keep it handy!

Au revoir!

Mary Gaerty
President, National Council of Women



Congratulations to The Hon. Marlene Mizzi MEP



NCW congratulates Marlene Mizzi on being awarded the MEP of the Year Award for her work and achievements on the internal market and consumer protection issues.

MEP Marlene Mizzi plays a leading role in the internal market and consumer protection committee as key negotiator on several Digital Single Market dossiers. She helped to finalise and draft European legislation on important issues such as net neutrality and abolishing roaming charges. She also worked on a strategic report on shaping the future of European standards and is one of the leading MEPs fighting for lower prices on international phone calls within Europe.

Still the need to commemorate International Women's Day in 2018

More than a century ago women started a fight against inequality and oppression and today, 2018, we still commemorate International Women's Day, if perhaps not for the same oppression as in 1908, but for other forms of inequality, sexual harassment, lower pay, violence against women, femicide, modern day slavery, lack of representation on boards and in politics among others

March 8th should be the day when decision-makers stop and reflect on their responsibilities towards women. Throughout these years women have had to struggle to achieve rights that are theirs and no less significant than those of men, simply because they were born women. Society in general, especially men need to become sensitised about these issues as it also concerns their daughters, wives and mothers. Many European countries still have a patriarchal society and before society comes to terms with the unfairness of this fact and develop a serious strategy and plan to rectify the situation, not even in another hundred years will women achieve gender equality. The National Council of Women, once again urges political leaders to put in practice a strategy that reflects the realities of today as soon as possible.

There should be no more news headlines about sexual harassment towards girls and women, in sports, leisure and at the workplace, nor should there be reports about femicide and other cases of violence against women, that regretfully, have continued to grow in numbers. As a start, the 'magic wand' lies in the type of education both girls and boys, men and women receive, changing perceptions and accepting the fact that both

have capabilities and skills that complement each other and which they can make use of for the benefit of society. Why is such a large percentage of what women can bring to the drawing board being ignored and wasted!

The National Council of Women urges all stakeholders to eliminate the perception that women are suitable for 'certain' jobs only and instead encourage them to take up STEM subjects, that will lead to jobs of the future: in science, research, technology in a world that is fast becoming more and more digitalized.

Female entrepreneurship must also be on the agenda. Today many mothers are breadwinners with family responsibilities. It is imperative that every possible measure and support is given to them, so that they can seize opportunities that will allow both fathers and mothers to balance work and family life and contribute to the economy, with the assurance that the family is not being disadvantaged.

The National Council of Women has worked and advocated for women's rights and empowerment throughout these last fifty four years, remaining the most active and consistent women's organization, not least in its road to achieving the goals set in the UN 5th sustainable development goal and urges decision makers to #PRESS FOR PROGRESS in achieving gender equality.

Mary Gaerty
President

National Council of Women Malta

#PRESS FOR PROGRESS in Education, Health and Politics International Women's Day Roundtable Discussion – 8th March 2018

The National Council of Women in collaboration with Kummissjoni Nisa Qalbisti Socjeta Filarmonika Pinto Banda San Sebastjan organized a Roundtable Discussion on Thursday 8th March 2018 at the Pinto Band Club Qormi. The Hon Rosianne Cutajar spoke about the Participation of Women in decision making, Ms. Mandy Mifsud spoke about Lifelong learning formal and informal education and Ms. Mary Said Buttigieg gave a presentation about the Beliefs, Values and Attitudes in health care. Participants were asked to write a suggestion on the general theme #PressforProgress and place it up on a board, this interaction between the panel of guest speakers and the audience brought more diversity into the agenda thus making the event very interesting and enlightening.



International Women's Day Homily Press for Progress – Sunday 4th March 2018

During these past 3 Sundays of Lent, the first reading for holy mass has presented us with important biblical figures. They are important because with them – and through them with all humanity – our good Lord made a COVENANT.

We met **Noah** on the 1st Sunday reading: to him God promised never to punish humanity on a vast scale by disasters. And he gave him a sign: the rainbow (in Maltese the bow of God=qawsalla). Then we met **Abraham**, and with him too, the Lord made a pact. He promised a new people that would start from him, Abraham, and which would be a people consecrated to the Lord. The sign God asked from Abraham and his descendants was the circumcision of all males.

On this 3rd Sunday, we meet **Moses**. The Covenant of God with Moses is meant to steady his people the Israelites as they face a new way of life, journeying through inhospitable country towards what would be their permanent home. The sign of this covenant are the well known Ten Commandments. A covenant is the establishing of a relationship between two parties so that good may come out. If both parties keep the pact, there will be security, prosperity and peace. On his part, the good Lord never went back on his word. *“Does a mother forget her baby, or a woman the child in her womb? Yet, even if these forget, I will never forget my own!”* (Is. 49:15). The tragedy is that humanity, as nations, as groups or even as individuals, often, too often, forgot their part of the covenant! They failed to honour it; they betrayed it.

This week, together with many other countries, we celebrate “International Women’s Day”. It is a time to recall the achievements of women and the progress that’s been made for the improvement of the position of women in society. The motto for this year’s event is: PRESS FOR PROGRESS. This week, many women in different organisations, ‘press on’ as to arrive to forge a covenant with society, so that their rights, dignity, and equality may be recognised and respected. I say they must do this pact, come to this understanding with society at large, because, as Gloria Steinem, world renowned

journalist/ activist for women’s rights, said: “The story of women’s struggle for equality belongs to no single feminist nor to any one organisation but to the collective efforts of all who care about human rights”: female or male. And I use the words of the motto, saying “press for”, that is insist, strive... because not all people have the good will to stay faithful to the pact agreed. And not all will agree as to the meaning of the word “progress”. While progress for a woman in Afghanistan might mean freedom to bare her face and breathe, for another one in Europe it might mean the freedom to wear what she likes. And if the dream for a woman in central Africa is to have a tap and running water in her house, for another in a rich country is to have 20 breakfast cereals to choose from. And again, if for a Syrian mother progress will be achieved when it stops raining bombs so her children may be safe, for an American mother it could mean that schools be safe. In U K, progress could mean a drastic reduction of domestic abuse. An estimated 2 million people – 85% women, 15% men – are suffering from domestic abuse. Every year *SaveLives* works with around 60,000 victims (51,000 women). The others remain hidden, not reported. (A member-helper of *SaveLives-UK*).

I wish to rephrase Pope Francis who said “Abusing of people is a crime, but abusing of women is worse: it destroys harmony”. And so, to conclude this homily, may I dare suggest that instead of talking about gender parity, and empowerment, and women’s rights (as if they were different from human rights) we start understanding and promoting ‘gender harmony’! Which means respect, communication, cooperation, listening, relation, sharing, and caring. And weren’t all these good qualities already in the Ten Commandments that the good Lord gave us? And weren’t these, already part of the Covenant that God made with humanity, and with each of us at baptism?

Rev. Fr. Joe Cini sdb
Chaplain
St. Patrick’s Church, Sliema



Malta Institute of Accountants Conference for International Women's Day

The Malta Institute of Accountants organized a conference on the occasion of Women's Day with the theme 'Inspire to Achieve'. The conference was held under the auspices of the President of Malta Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca and addressed by leading women professionals, this was the first ever event focusing specifically on women by MIA.

The Institute also marked the day with the formal launch of a study into gender-based pay gaps within the accounting profession, conducted by MISCO, a recognised leader in independent marketing, research and HR consultancy in Malta.

The conference brought to the fore important issues such as leadership, achieving, and the expectations of millennials, it also discussed gender disparity in leadership positions. The moderator was Ms Vanessa Macdonald. The conference had two main sessions: leadership and influence' on how women can inspire others; and, 'breaking the barriers' on the changing situation of women in the workplace. The programme presented a remarkable line-up of speakers which included Dr Natalie Kenely, Ms Angela Attard Fenech, Ms Giselle Borg, Ms Mary Gaerty, Ms Lisa Pullicino, Ms Grace Camilleri, Ms Claudine Cassar, Ms Bettina Mifsud, and Ms Karen Spiteri Bailey. The Conference, "Inspire to Achieve" was held at Villa Arrigo Naxxar on Friday 9th March 2018.



International Human Rights Day

On the 17th of December 2017, The Malta Medical Students Association (MMSA) has organised an event to celebrate the International Human Rights Day, in Valletta. Different Organisations set up stands in front of the Parliament Building to reach out to people entering Valletta and to give out information about their work. The National Council of Women participated in the event with a stand entitled 'Women's Rights' where copies of *Il-Mara* were distributed. Her Excellency Mary Louise Coleiro Preca attended the event.

International Human Rights Day commemorates the 10th Day of December in 1948 whereby the United Nations General Assembly adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in France.

This day is celebrated because the Declaration has set universal values for all peoples of all nations and establishes "equal dignity and worth of every person". The Declaration, although not a binding document, has provided a basis and has influenced several Human Rights Instruments that were introduced in the following years. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been regarded as the most translated document in modern history, available in more than 500 languages.

The United Nations state that this is a Declaration which "empowers us all". The aim of this event was to increase awareness about the International Human Rights and minority groups which are most at risk of having their rights breached.



The National Council of Women participated in this event, not only to give insight to the general public about the Council's work, but also to invite them to voice their concerns, opinions and to entice them to be proactive towards achieving equality. Although a lot of progress has been made since 1948, there is more to be achieved in the field of Women's Rights. In order to continue working together and achieving equality, different women from all walks of life are to make their voices heard and for this I invite you to be active in National Council of Women's different Committees so that together we can take Women's Rights to an optimal level.

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. [...] Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world." – Eleanor Roosevelt

Rebecca Janelle Wellman

NCW Executive Committee Member / Youth Committee Member

National Council of Women AGM 2018 Press Release

NCW AGM 2018 ... a smart, innovative and sustainable future

The Annual General Meeting of the National Council of Women was held on Saturday 27th January 2018, at The Victoria Hotel, Sliema. President Mary Gaerty spoke about the work which the Council has embarked on during 2017. This included pensions, education for entrepreneurship, violence against women and the challenges faced by women on a daily basis. Mary Gaerty stressed the need to address poverty and the means to overcome it through education, knowledge about financial independence and financial capability. She also referred to other important areas that the Council is working on including harassment at the workplace, equal pay for equal work, prostitution, pro-life initiatives and not least NCW's stand against abortion.

She also spoke about NCW's position on the Consultative Council for Women's Rights which Hon Helena Dalli, Minister for Equality and Civil Dialogue and European Affairs has recently launched to ensure a holistic approach to women's social, economic and political rights. She highlighted the involvement of NCW through its three-year project, providing a full programme for women of all ages to start their own business. NCW is also contributing to the President's EmPOWERment Foundation targeting the promotion of Women in Leadership. The President stated that the Council has been closely following crucial current and future social and economic developments in a number of areas at National and EU level. The 2018 AGM resolutions will form the basis of the policies of NCW, in line with these developments for a sustainable future.

The General Assembly discussed and approved a number of resolutions, including those submitted by the affiliated organisations. The Role of Women in

the Sustainable Development Goals from a Maltese perspective was one of the key areas of the AGM providing International and European policies to be adapted to the Maltese situation: eliminating the obstacles to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political social, economic and cultural life of their countries.

The AGM also addressed issues concerning different forms of harassment at different levels of the workplace and the importance of improving the status of Vocational Education and training to meet the future needs of Industry.

Other areas addressed were euthanasia, abortion and prostitution. The importance of extending Personal and Social Education beyond Secondary School level was also debated. With regards to women's health the AGM focused on the importance of ensuring informed consent to meet the holistic needs of women undergoing Gynaecological Surgery

Ms. Catherine Tabone, Executive Director Valletta 2018 Foundation was guest speaker at the AGM and gave a presentation about the many cultural and artistic activities, which are being organized during this year.

The newly elected Executive Committee Members for 2018 are: *President* Mary Gaerty; *Hon. General Secretary* Doris Bingley; *Vice Presidents* Grace Attard, Amy Camilleri Zahra, Diane Xuereb; *Hon. Treasurer* Therese Cassola; *Members* Nadyanne Mangion, Doris Caruana, Ritianne Ellul, Tamara Gauci, Mandy Mifsud, Gertrude Abela, Lara Gail Dougall, Josette Barbara Cardona, Dr Fransina Abela, Rebecca Wellman and Dr Claudine Zarb, NCW Legal Advisor.

Mary Gaerty
NCW President



The National Council of Women

Saturday, 27th



Women Annual General Meeting

January 2018



Resolutions 2018

Addressing Malta's demographic changes and new forms of work post 2020

Name of Organisation submitting the resolution – National Council of Women

Justification

Demographic changes are the dynamics in the quantifiable statistics of a given population

Demography seeks to understand population changes by investigating such demographic components as gender, age, ethnicity, home ownership, mobility, disabilities, language knowledge, employment status and location. The combination of low fertility and low mortality will bring significant change in the makeup of our population

Demography examines the relationship of changes through deaths, births and migration in demographic composition, with the natural environment and with social and economic change. Demographic indicators may include population size, crude birth rate, population growth rate, crude death rate, fertility rate, life expectancy and infant mortality. Estimated and projected gender and age distributions in relation to fertility rates could also be included. The impact of demographic change is considered as one of the most important challenges for the future.

These elements and how they change constitute vital information about the population of a given location and its culture. Demography examines the relationship of changes through deaths, births and migration in demographic composition, with the natural environment and with social and economic change. Demographic indicators may include population size, crude birth rate, population growth rate, crude death rate, fertility rate, life expectancy and infant mortality. The impact of demographic change is considered as one of the most important challenges for the future.

According to the Malta Employers Association (MEA) Position Paper on Malta's Demographic Challenges recently presented to the MCESD, the following economic and social aspects were pointed out

In spite of an increase in the activity rate and female participation, the domestic labour supply has failed to keep up with the sudden increase in demand due to the number of productive hours demanded and also partially owing to skills mismatches.

Consequently over the past decade, there has been an increase in foreign employees, 18% of the workforce being foreign in 2017. These employees – whether they are EU citizens or third country nationals – are now being seen as necessary to sustain economic growth, and thus the authorities are adopting a more open door policy to foreign employees, as labour shortages are prevalent across all economic sectors

The social, environmental, employment, infrastructure impact of these new demographic changes also need to

be taken into consideration such as housing, rental rates, education systems: more students with different educational background levels, immigration from EU countries, Asia, North Africa etc which are also resulting in the increase of SMEs and jobs in the caring sector

Digitalisation and new forms of work

Digital technology is playing an increasingly important role in our economy and social life

Digitalisation will change our working life dramatically. We have to ensure that the appropriate skills are available for the future, so that Malta remains competitive and is able to create new businesses and new jobs, people can remain integrated into the labour market throughout their entire working lives, and well-being for all is assured.

The speed at which digitalisation and automation happens also involves social risks which we have to deal with through the coordinated efforts of all stakeholders: decision makers, the social partners and civil society.

The changing nature of work and employment relations also needs to be taken in consideration. On-line platforms, crowd sourcing, economically dependent self-employed and other new forms of self-employment, issues relating to regulation of the activity of the intermediary, liability for accidents, damage and service failures need to be addressed to protect workers, consumers and the public at large.

There is a need for clarification of the applicability of existing EU regulations on safety and health at work for these new forms of employment, procedures for dealing with breaches of these regulations, responsibilities for inspection and for workers', consumers' and public liability insurance.

Work is also changing in traditional companies. In particular, knowledge-intensive work can take place in increasingly unconstrained conditions, which, on one hand, corresponds to a **desire for flexibility** expressed by many employees, but, on the other, can lead to increased intensification and burdens. An increasingly **multi-local working environment** requires new social competencies

Automation and **robots** will have a significant impact on the future of work. A significant number of **jobs** will be affected by the introduction of more robots into the workplace

Education systems

One of the most important questions is how to re-orient training and education, on the one hand, towards employers' needs and, on the other hand, towards higher and better employability, in a labour market environment characterised by a high degree of uncertainty and fast and unpredictable changes, and to adapt the content of training

and education pathways for the upgrading and re-skilling of adult workers. This challenge affects employers and employees equally, forcing them to put more effort into forecasting, planning and strategy.

Recommendations

The speed at which digitalisation and automation happens also involves social risks which we have to deal with through the coordinated efforts of all stakeholders: decision makers, the social partners and civil society.

Future skills should match societal needs and the demands of the labour market. This can only be achieved through close cooperation between the social partners and public and private education systems. More volatile markets will give rise to challenges, as businesses and workers will have to adapt quickly enough. This, in particular, is a challenge for professional training systems.

Technical and social competencies, which comprise the ability to communicate and interact with people in different contexts and through different technical tools, as well as **entrepreneurial competencies** and a focus on responsibility towards society, are already a prerequisite, however, education systems need to deliver them in the context of the demographic changes we are witnessing in Malta

Lifelong learning, needs to plan ahead to address the diversity of human potential, particularly related to digital skills, which will be a necessity for everyone, requiring more and more flexibility from individuals, companies and all education and training systems.

Beyond formal education, much more time will have to be devoted to professional training and informal learning, which should be supported as much as possible by an EU-wide harmonised system of certificates and standards

Long-term developments, which may lead to new and unpredictable challenges where today's skills can quickly become obsolete, can best be dealt with by general education. The better the general education, the better the preparation for the unknown. A broad general education is also the best basis for learning how to single out reliable information on the internet and for becoming less vulnerable to fake news.

Competencies are a necessary prerequisite for transforming knowledge into results that increase our well-being – yet the digital age brings new challenges. Growing numbers of workers with atypical employment contracts frequently lack access to traditional, company-based training schemes.

To achieve enhanced learning experiences and outcomes of learning, the education system needs to place the learner at its centre: he/she is the one who should regulate his/her learning, training and upskilling. This would equip learners to become active, digital citizens, able to capitalise on the knowledge they acquired by controlling the nature, place, pace and timing of their learning in accordance with their views and values, and with values such as solidarity and respect for difference that are part of the European identity.

Digital tools play an important role in transforming and supporting teaching, which can result in the increased engagement of learners and improved results. As **educators and teachers** will have an increasingly important role to play, their competencies will have to adapt to new approaches, technologies and knowledge in the new education environment. Qualitative preparation of educators will, therefore, become key, as well as their status in terms of professional flexibility, remuneration, social

The fundamental role of social partners and collective bargaining, and the role of civil society, in general, in limiting the negative effects of these fast changes and in enhancing the positive aspects is a crucial aspect. The importance of social security for those in new forms of work, such as crowd workers, and of the new types of work environment; the relevance of lifelong learning and the need of future skills must be at the forefront of national plans in dealing with the demographic challenges.

Grace Attard
1st Vice President

Sources:

MEA Position Paper on Malta's Demographic Challenges
EESC SOC 570 Future of work/skills
SOC 562 Skills and new forms of work



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ICW Statement to mark International Women's Day 2018

In support of the Theme for International Women's Day (IWD) as set out by UN Women, "Time is Now: rural and urban activists transforming women's lives," the International Council of Women (ICW-CIF) reaffirms its unwavering commitment to working towards progress in ending all forms of discrimination and violence against women, in promoting gender equality in all spheres of life, and in achieving empowerment of women. ICW-CIF applauds the Commission on the Status of Women for its outstanding effort to identify challenges and to create opportunities for promoting gender equality leading to the empowerment of women and girls.

Together with its affiliated national and regional Councils, the ICW-CIF calls for:

1. Public and private sectors to adopt policies and measures that increase the proportion of women in leadership positions in governments at all levels, on boards, in executive management positions, and in social and public institutions of civil society. Such leadership is essential to transform the socio-cultural traditions that hamper progress toward gender equality and women's empowerment.

2. All women, regardless of age, and particularly those from a rural, indigenous or migrant background, have the right to enjoy the same opportunities as their male counterparts in obtaining the quality education and training that equips them with the technical skills necessary to improve productivity, to secure employment, and to be successful in a vocation.

3. Equal pay for equal work, and recognition of the value of unpaid household and care work. It is a well-established fact that increasing the number of women in the workforce leads to higher economic productivity and growth at the community, national, and regional levels. Women should be paid fairly for their contribution.

4. Equal access of women and girls to quality health care, productive resources, and social protection compared to men. The



creation of essential institutions, such as child care centers, and policies which do not discriminate on the basis of gender can help to alleviate the excessive unpaid care and household burdens borne by women.

5. Governments to establish policies and measures that eliminate all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, human and sex-trafficking, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

6. Collaboration of governments, civil society, and the media to raise awareness of the plight and challenges facing women and girls. Working together, the likelihood of success in movement toward gender equality and empowerment is far greater than working in isolation.

We strongly urge all governments to adopt legislation, policies and measures, supported by appropriate budget allocation, to make a firm commitment to accelerate progress towards women's economic empowerment and gender equality. This will certainly stimulate higher economic growth, assist in the movement toward sustainable development, and contribute in meaningful ways to true peace in the world.

International Women's Day 2018

'Progress for Women and the Vote in the Commonwealth'

To commemorate International Women's Day, the Commonwealth's Gender Section hosted an event at Marlborough House entitled 'Progress for Women and the Vote in the Commonwealth'.

Doris Bingley attended the event which aimed to celebrate the achievements, determination and courage of women and girls across the Commonwealth in struggle for democracy, development and peace. It called for absolute gender equality in all spheres and at all levels.

The event was opened by the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Patricia Scotland, who highlighted the role of the Commonwealth in strengthening the progress for gender quality. "Recognition and advancement of the rights of women is inextricably linked to our Commonwealth priorities of inclusiveness and empowerment, and of social, economic and political development," she said. The Secretary-General added: "Our campaign towards equal rights for women has resonance with other campaigns against injustice and discrimination – including those against child, early and forced marriage, people trafficking, modern slavery, female genital mutilation, and other forms of sexual or domestic violence."

Her opening remarks were followed by a keynote address by Helen Pankhurst from CARE International who stated that "1.2 billion women of the Commonwealth remain underrepresented in the political processes. As we move forward in the UK and across the Commonwealth, we need our politicians to be as diverse and reflective of our societies as possible, and also for our procedures to be transparent. We are at our strongest when the voices of those most representing the marginalized and silenced amongst us are centre stage and in the corridors of power." Helen Pankhurst is the granddaughter of Emmeline Pankhurst who was a British political activist and leader of the British suffragette movement and helped women win the right to vote in 1918.

The panel included the High Commissioners of New Zealand, Trinidad and Tobago and Rwanda to the UK. They spoke about best practices in their countries that not only provided equal opportunities to women and girls, but also enabled an environment to fully exercise those opportunities without discrimination. The discussion concluded with an informal question and answer session in which the panelists encouraged attendees to carry forward their messages about the way people perceive the roles and rights of women.



Commission on the Status of Women – CSW62

12-23 March 2018, United Nations New York

“Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls”

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is the principal global inter-governmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was established in 1946 with a mandate to prepare recommendations on promoting women's rights in the political, economic, civil, social and educational fields.

UN Women is the Secretariat of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which works collaboratively with member States, non governmental organisations (NGOs), other agencies, academia and the private sector to advance the priority areas.

Doris Bingley, NCW Malta Hon General Secretary and ICW Vice-President accepted the invitation to participate in the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Apart from the priority theme “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls” there is a review theme “Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women”.

NGO CSW/NY organise the Forum in parallel with the CSW Session to provide civil society an opportunity to engage with member states. During the Commission's annual two-week session, representatives of the UN Member States, Civil Society Organisations and UN Entities gather at the UN Headquarters in New York. This is the largest Commission Gathering at the United Nations with thousands of people attending the NGO CSW Forum.

To be able to absorb and take part in the UN events and NGO parallel sessions, one has to be very organised. Participating in the Opening of the Session, attending the General Discussions and Ministerial Round Tables on the priority theme is necessary. Another must is the NGO CSW/NY daily morning briefing where one can submit proposals and comments on the themes and discuss the progress of the outcome document being prepared.

Among the many events Doris Bingley attended, apart from the above, she was present at the Commonwealth Annual Consultation of National Women's Machineryes. A generalised framework for assessing the economic cost of violence against women and girls was presented and discussed. Next she attended two side-events organised by the Republic of Malta under the Head of Delegation HE Dr Helena Dalli Minister for European Affairs and Equality. One was on “SOGIESC in Gender Mainstreaming Measures” in collaboration with Outright Action International and the second one was on “Setting Standards Against Gender-based Violence” with speakers from Australia, the Commonwealth, UN Women and the Council of Europe. She also attended the side-event of the Regional Council of South America which together with the International Council of Women discussed “Education and Empowerment of Rural Women: Strategies to Eliminating Poverty”. Another ICW event in collaboration with WHO and Jamaica was about “Advancing Women's Health and Well-Being” While the main ICW event sponsored by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations was “Transforming Society Through Empowerment of Rural Women”. Another event attended was the one organized by the Arab Women Organisation with the theme “Rural Women in the Arab Region: Cases of Challenges and Resilience” Also the “Good practices in the Empowerment of Rural Women” organized by the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office was also very informative. Another very good side-event was the one by the International Federation for Business and Professional Women on : “Empowering women to realize the Sustainable Development Goals” in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations and moderated by the International President of BPW Dr Amany Asfour.

Keeping in mind that CSW62 priority and review themes resulted in many proposals, comments and challenges put forward. It is hoped that the recommendations will be reflected in the Agreed Conclusions which need to be implemented globally to advance towards “No One is Left Behind”.



International Council of Women Board Meeting

The ICW Board Meeting was held on the first weekend of CSW62. It was a very positive and important meeting as apart from the issues and work normally associated with this meeting, the forthcoming triennial was discussed. The Indonesian organising committee was in New York to meet ICW board members. They presented their plans and programme and agreed on the dates. ICW Triennial will take place in Yogyakarta, Indonesia from the 13th to 18th September 2018. ICW President Jungsook Kim will be sending the invitations, registration forms and information to all National Councils of Women in April.

Doris Bingley
NCW Malta and ICW Vice-President



The Hague Conference on Private International Law

The « Parentage / Surrogacy Project »

Intervention of a Grouping of Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations

In March 2015, we sent to the permanent Bureau a contribution showing that surrogacy is contrary to international human rights law and proposing the creation within the UN of a Convention on the International Abolition of Surrogacy. We also requested to be consulted as part of the current work of the HCCH, in order to represent the views of civil society.

Since our contribution has not been taken into account so far, we ask once again for our arguments to be considered by the Experts' Group on Parentage / Surrogacy.

We ask for a radical change of perspective in the way the issue of surrogate motherhood is dealt with.

Surrogacy is a huge market of several billion dollars, entirely built on the ownership of the female body and on the transformation of children into commodities. It is not a reproductive technology (technically, it is nothing more than in vitro fertilization) but an exploitative social practice, which has to be abolished.

From a legal point of view, we would like to draw to the attention of the Experts' Group the blatant contradiction between the mechanisms at stake in surrogacy and the core principles of the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption. In order to prevent the trafficking and buying of reproductive capacities, Article 4 of this Convention provides, as a fundamental rule, that the consent of the birth parents, in particular the consent of the mother, can only be given after the birth of the child (prohibition of prior arrangements and of any planned abandonment of the child), and cannot be obtained through payment or compensation of any kind. However, the existence of such arrangements and financial compensations are a core component of surrogacy: the price of the service provided by the mother, and therefore the price of the child to be born, is the object of a preliminary agreement. There is hence a blatant contradiction between surrogacy and the philosophy underlying the Convention on Intercountry Adoption, a contradiction which cannot be covered up by any legal or semantic artifice. The Hague Conference cannot, without being inconsistent, encourage on the one hand what it rightfully opposes on the other hand.

Moreover, surrogacy contradicts many international conventions on the protection of human rights, e.g. the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as demonstrated in the study enclosed / attached.

Surrogacy is the sale of a child, in the meaning of the Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This protocol defines the sale of children as follows: "Sale of children means any act or transaction whereby a child is transferred by any person or group of persons to another for remuneration or any other consideration".

Such a transaction is precisely at the core of surrogacy,

which is based on the giving away of the child by the mother to the clients, in exchange for remuneration or "compensation". This payment has been previously agreed upon (even in countries where commercial surrogacy is officially forbidden) in the form of a compensation for vaguely defined expenses or "loss of remuneration". The object of this commercial exchange is not only the pregnancy or delivery, it is the child itself, whose maternal parentage is transferred to the commissioning parents. Whatever ways language is deployed to artificially cover up this reality, it cannot be concealed.

We also invite the Experts, and more widely the Member States, to see beyond the apparent neutrality of legal terminology, and become aware of the extreme violence of a system in which women from poor or humble backgrounds, in order to fulfil pre-arranged contracts, renounce not only the faculty of making their own decisions concerning their health (which they jeopardize), but also lose any real capacity of changing their minds and being recognised as the mothers of the children they have borne for nine months and have given birth to. And this, either because of anticipated filiation in application of the law or the contract (as is done in California), or because of the preference given to commissioning parents by courts, despite laws officially requiring the surrogate mother's consent after the birth (as is the case in the United Kingdom). Surrogacy is then not merely programmed abandonment, but in many cases forced abandonment. The mother – the woman who has borne the child – is nothing more than a uterus. Such takeover of an individual's life and body has not been seen since the abolition of slavery.

This is something more and more countries are coming to understand: having fallen prey to this new traffic, and faced on their own territories the horror of this exploitation of the poor to the profit of rich Westerners, they have decided to forbid surrogacy unconditionally (Thailand for commercial surrogacy, Cambodia), or at least to ban it for foreigners (India, Nepal, Mexico).

This is why we reiterate our call to the members of the Experts' Group of the Hague International Conference, to whom we ask:

1. to renounce working on any instrument which would tend to organise surrogate motherhood internationally or would favour mutual recognition in this domain;
2. to recognize the necessity of a Convention on the Abolition of Surrogacy, similar to what was done against slavery and practices analogous to slavery with the Conventions of 1926 and 1956, and to recommend that the Member States of the Conference engage in this direction within the United Nations, which is the relevant organisation in this respect.

Organizations signatories

23 NGO – 8 countries – 2 international networks

DIARY OF EVENTS

January

- 8th New Year drinks at the Labour Party Headquarters, Mary Gaerty and Doris Bingley attended
- MCESD Civil Society meeting
- 11th Gender quotas a catalyst for change in Irish politics
Grace Attard attended
- 15th Executive Meeting at NCW Centre
- 17th Council for Gender Rights meeting Mary Gaerty attended
- 21st Reception on US Mount Whitney Doris Bingley and Marie Demicoli attended
- 23rd Domestic Violence NGO Network Meeting
- 25th Closing Events Project Create, Liberate Integrate Mary Gaerty attended
- Holocaust Remembrance Day at San Anton Palace. Doris Bingley and Marie Demicoli attended.
- 26th Australia Day Reception
- MUESAC Core Group Meeting Mary Gaerty and Grace Attard attended
- 27th National Council of Women Annual General Meeting at the Victoria Hotel, Sliema
- emPOWER Meeting

February

- 7th MMSA Gender Equality Seminar at University Gertrude Abela attended.
- 9th Chinese Spring Festival Mary Gaerty and Doris Bingley attended
- 12th MCESD CS. meeting
- 13th NCW Executive Committee meeting
- VOPS information session
- 14th Consultative Council meeting for Gender Rights Doris Bingley attended
- 15th Association of Speech Language Pathologist Seminar entitled, "Professional Ethics and Cyber safety" at the Professional Centre
- 16th Monitoring Committee meeting at MCC Doris Bingley participated

- 21st Meeting to organise IWD event in collaboration with Kummissjoni Nisa Qalbisti San Sebastjan
- 26th Domestic Violence NGO meeting Doris Bingley and Grace Attard attended
- MCESD C.S Meeting Mary Gaerty attended
- 27th NCW Central Committee meeting at NCW Centre
- 28th Department of gender studies public lecture
- "The other side of the kitchen, the political liveness of the domestic"
- Main speaker Dr. Rachael Scicluna at Gateway Building Hall.
- 28th Meeting with Lady Sue Tunnicliffe and Kathleen Nugent with regards Talking Science classes held during the summer months.

March

- 1st V18 Culture Matters at the Chamber of Commerce Valletta Reception to celebrate Fulbright Programme Doris Bingley attended
- Citizens' Dialogue with Commissioner Oettinger at the Grand Hotel Excelsior Grace Attard attended
- 2nd Women in Politics, Women in Media seminar organised by the European Parliament Office in Malta and the National Council of Women together with MCWO
- 4th International Women's Day Celebration Mass at St Patrick's Church Sliema organised by NCW
- 5th NCPE annual conference at the Old University Aula Magna Valletta Mary Gaerty and Grace Attard attended
- 6th USA reception to celebrate Youth Alumni and exchanges at Villa Apap Bologna Mary Gaerty attended
- 7th Nisa Laburist seminar "We lead Together" Mary Gaerty attended

- 8th Ghaqda Nisa Giljarizi Seminar entitled, "Is-Sabih Hajja" BPW Careers' Day Grace Attard attended
- Roundtable Discussion organised by NCW and KNQ at Pinto Band Club.
- 8th International Women's Day Commonwealth Secretariat Marlborough House. Doris Bingley attended
- 9th Malta Institute of Accountants celebrated Women's day with a conference entitled, "Inspire to achieve" Mary Gaerty invited as speaker.
- 11th Annual Consultation of Commonwealth National Women's Machinery meeting in New York USA Doris Bingley participated.
- 12th Consultative council meeting Mary Gaerty Attended
- 12th-23rd CSW62 meetings in New York United States of America Doris Bingley participated
- 13th Malta Infertility Network Conference Grace Attard attended
- 15th Ireland's National Day World Day Consumer Day Seminar organised by MCCA
- 16th China Cultural Centre
- 20th Once again Demonstration of healthcare Body building
- 16th LEAD a new, ten-year project embarked on by Partit Laburista meeting at Gran Salon of the National Museum of Archaeology, Valletta
- 17th National association of pensions AGM
- 22nd-23rd Introduction to Gender Mainstreaming in University Curricula and Research workshop
- 28th Half-day of Recollection at NCW Centre
- Consultative Committee Meeting Mary Gaerty attended

The National Council of Women welcomes these New Members

| Name and Surname | Sponsored By | Locality |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Juhaina Mohamed Nasser Al Tobi | Therese Cassola | Msida |
| Catherine Cauchi | Therese Cassola | Zejtun |
| Jessica Caruana | Rebecca Wellman | Gudja |
| Marianne Calleja | Marie Demicoli | Mosta |
| Judith Pajaron | Jennifer Icao Calleja | Qormi |

Forthcoming Events

London, 16th-18th April 2018

The week of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) begins with four forum events, bringing together representatives from the worlds of business, civil society and government.

The Women's, Youth and People's Forums will run concurrently at the Queen Elizabeth II Centre, situated opposite the UK Houses of Parliament. Participants will include Commonwealth leaders, government ministers, members of the British royal family, senior UN figures, business leaders, civil society activists and literary figures.

The 2018 Women's Forum will reflect on some of the global challenges still faced by women, as part of a wider commitment to "leave no one behind" in the Commonwealth journey to achieving gender equality by 2030.



The Women's Forum will draw international delegates from the Commonwealth and the rest of the world to highlight women's positive political, economic and societal contributions and establish how women and girls will be key to building sustainable and resilient societies.

The programme will include substantive plenary sessions and parallel workshops providing the opportunity for participants to focus on specific areas including:

Women in leadership / Women, peace and security / Women's economic empowerment
Gender parity in education / Ending violence against women and girls / Eliminating harmful practises

Inclusive Governance: The Challenge for a Contemporary Commonwealth



The Commonwealth People's Forum (CPF) brings together civic voices from around the world to debate key issues facing Commonwealth people.

Summer Courses 2018 at NCW Centre

Once again the National Council of Women will be offering various courses during the summer months. Our motto is "Together we learn together we succeed" so we urge you to contact the office and check if there is any course which you would like to follow during Summer 2018. Summer courses will start during the first week of July.