



PSI WORLD WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

18 May 2016, Geneva (Switzerland)

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The PSI World Women's Committee met on 18th May 2016, with the participation of 33 women (16 titulars and 17 observers) and the General Secretary. Discussion focused on how to shape PSI's policy on gender equality for the 2017 Congress.

Here are the principal themes and decisions:

I. | Global policy and gender equality

- **United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW): Report from the 60th session, results and way forward**

The main theme of the session was the economic empowerment of women and its connection with sustainable development. Our major achievement this year was the recognition of the role of trade unions in defending women's rights at the workplace and in society in general.

During these two weeks, the women's movement had a strong discussion that transcended states and governments, strengthening the social movements and shaping new alternatives. In this context, PSI organised a parallel event entitled "Arab Women and the Right to Peace", introducing for the first time in the feminist debate the essential role of independent trade unions in building democracy and promoting peace.

The union delegation comprised 160 delegates (including 1 man) from 34 countries. The PSI's delegation comprised 20 women from 18 countries in Africa and Arab Countries, Asia-Pacific, Europe and the Interamericas regions. Juneia Batista, WOC Chair, was accredited on the Brazilian government's delegation and Matildah Masame on the Botswana government's delegation.

Although the negotiations over the content of the Agreed Conclusions had not been conducted before the event this year, and the women's movement was not excluded as it was at the 59th session of the UNCSW, and despite the fact that one of the main achievements in 2015 was the agreement on the participation of civil society representatives in the preparation of UNCSW60, the procedure for inviting members to the High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, once again downgraded the participation of civil society and grassroots organisations and turned the production of proposals for action into an elitist exercise. The most worrying aspect of the process for selecting the panel members and its final composition was the way it tilted the balance towards financial and corporate power.



The main theme of UNCSW61 will be “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work” and the Brazilian ambassador, Antonio Patriota, was re-elected as chair.

WOC members decided to:

- 1) Join the other global trade unions in launching a campaign on 7th October (International Day for Decent Work) to prepare for UNCSW61. This campaign will be launched at the Women’s Meeting during APRECON;
- 2) Denounce the privatising initiative concealed in the UNCSW60 Agenda for Development, in particular in its Conclusions, and include consideration of this matter in the trade union strategy for the UNCSW61 session;
- 3) Increase pressure on UN-WOMEN by consolidating alliances with the women’s social movements that are campaigning against privatisation and global corporate power and for universal access to quality and gender responsive public services;
- 4) Prepare PSI’s delegation, including a meeting of all delegates one day before UNCSW61 starts, with the technical support of PSAC;
- 5) Maintain PSI’s stance on Arab Women’s Human Right to Peace.

II. | Gender-mainstreaming and PSI policy on Equality

In 2002, PSI approved a gender-mainstreaming policy and this has been reiterated in all Congress decisions since that date, up to and including the most recent Congress in Durban in 2012. Gender-mainstreaming requires changes to structures and relationships so they are more equal for both men and women.

During this last period, PSI has strengthened its sectoral work. It is essential to have a gender focus but for this to happen we need to improve our understanding of sectors, in terms of the gender composition of their workforce, union membership and leadership. We need practical ways of mainstreaming gender in sectoral work. This has been done on a concrete basis in the water area and by developing a new concept around gender-responsive public services.

- **Gender focus in sectorial work: water sector**

WOC members decided to:

- 1) Strengthen gender work in the water sector, particularly campaigns against privatisation, alliances with communities and women’s organisations and defence of gender equality in public water services;
- 2) Select India, Nigeria and Peru as countries for pilot water projects;
- 3) Link the 8th and 22nd March campaigns in 2017.



- **Sector gender profiles**

WOC members decided to:

- 1) Build gender sector profiles in all regions where it is necessary and to focus on English-speaking Africa this year;
- 2) Strengthen gender parity and the empowerment of women in all sectors.

- **Gender-responsive public services**

WOC decided to:

- 1) Deepen its understanding of gender-responsive public services;
- 2) Make this a priority for the health sector in 2016;
- 3) Continue with the work started in India and Ghana.

III. | Trade union and labour rights for public services women workers

The attack on labour and trade union rights in the public sector shows no sign of abating and is increasing in many countries. Collective bargaining has lost ground in some places and women have consequently seen significant achievements reversed.

- **Gender violence in the workplace**

In 2015, the ILO Governing Body agreed to discuss a new convention on violence at the workplace, including gender-based violence, in time for the International Labour Conference in 2018. PSI and its affiliates have a lot of expertise in this area. In Canada, for example, unions have made progress in dealing with the impact of domestic violence at the workplace. In other countries in the Caribbean, the Southern Cone and Brazil, progress has been made in dealing with gender violence at the workplace. This experience could help us make an important contribution to the new convention. PSI will attend the ILO Meeting of Experts in October this year and will contribute material to the Report on Law and Practices that is due to be completed by the beginning of 2017, prior to national consultations with ILO constituents.

The ILO's Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) has invited PSI and other global union federations to join a pilot project for implementing and integrating all this work into the process of building the new convention.

PSI is part of the Domestic Violence Network (DV@Network), which is based in Canada and to which Canadian and Australian unions and the global union federations are members, together with universities.



WOC members decided to:

- 1) Produce a document on the PSI's position on the new Convention, reflecting its expertise on this issue and its sectoral approach, with contributions from its affiliates;
- 2) Seek active participation of its Women's Committees in national consultations and development of proposals on the new Convention, through national trade union centres or independent unions affiliated to the PSI;
- 3) Increase participation in DV@Network and appoint Sandra Massiah, PSI Sub-regional Secretary for the Caribbean, as the contact person;
- 4) Select the health sector as a priority for the 25th November 2016 campaign.

- **Precarious Work**

The incidence of precarious work continues to increase at an alarming rate throughout the world. Precarious work in the public services affects all workers and users due to its impact on the quality of services. The proportion of young people and women affected is very high. The prevalence does of course vary but precarious work is already a worldwide phenomenon.

ITUC has invited PSI to work on a joint project in Africa, to raise awareness of precarious work in public services in particular countries, before later going on to organise a joint campaign. PSI will be part of an exploratory study on the nature of employment and labour relations in the health and education sectors. The project will be supported by the FNV, FOS and the ITUC's African Labour Research Network, in Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, Senegal, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

PSI is organising a World Action Day on Precarious Work on 7 October 2017. It will need to include the feminisation of the problem and its impact on young women workers.

WOC members decided to:

- 1) Focus international work on Africa;
- 2) Work on the exploratory study with the ITUC in the selected countries;
- 3) Gather information on studies of gender and precarious work in the public sector;
- 4) Focus on young women public service workers on the Global Day of Action.

- **Equal Pay**

This year, the issue has become more relevant and important in the context of defining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and discussions at the UNCSW60. This provides an opportunity for PSI to develop its proposals to transform gender relations at the workplace in the public services and overcome the historic and persistent sexual division of labour. A recent ILO's report about Women and Work reveals the persistence of a number of unacceptable gaps.



ILO Convention 100 is one of the core labour standards and is the most effective instrument for dealing with this problem in formal employment. On the other hand, PSI affiliates, particularly in the UK and Canada, have developed a high expertise in addressing the problem at the level of education, negotiation and litigation, achieving important milestones that are wins not only for these countries but for women workers of the world.

WOC members decided to:

- 1) Develop union observations on the implementation of C100 for 2016 in Denmark;
- 2) Choose Chile as a pilot country for implementation of bipartite procedures on gender-neutral job evaluation systems;
- 3) Increase the profile of the Equal Pay issue and PSI proposals as part of the UNCSW61 process;
- 4) Retain equal pay as the main issue on 8th March 2017.

IV. | PSI World Congress 2017

- **Gender focus in the PSI Programme of Action for 2018-22**

Since the World Congress in Durban in 2012, PSI has experienced significant political growth and an increased presence on the international scene, where the direction of global policy is debated and decided. It has confronted, in theory and practice, the political and economic powers of states and transnational companies.

Its campaigns to promote social and economic justice and efficient and accessible public services throughout the world have put equality, and within that, gender equality, on the agenda to build a new and non-oppressive society.

In this context, PSI will need to upgrade its political action on the now strategically important issue of gender equality. The organisation should adopt a comprehensive approach to this challenge and the World Women's Committee (WOC) should play a specific role at grassroots level.

To achieve this, the PSI Congress will need once again to reaffirm its gender mainstreaming policy.

WOC members decided to:

- 1) Prioritise gender mainstreaming as a PSI policy for 2018-22;
- 2) Formulate theoretical and practical proposals on gender mainstreaming in the PSI, to be presented to Congress;
- 3) Take responsibility for leading the process of gender mainstreaming in the PSI during 2018-22;
- 4) Deepen internal democracy of the women's committees at all levels.

Geneva, 18th May, 2016.