



US Women's Caucus at the UN  
General Membership Meeting Minutes  
At the UN NGO CSW67 Forum  
Thursday, March 9, 2023  
4-5:30p.m. Eastern Time  
In-person at St. Bartholomew's Church, NYC

### **Introduction and Welcome**

Susan Lee gave an overview of the Caucus and our history. This is an open meeting of our Caucus as part of the annual UN CSW forum. Today's meeting is focused on our guest speaker, Susan O'Malley. Susan introduced Susan O'Malley, past Chair of NGO CSW, NY.

### **Presentation by Susan O'Malley**

She has been the chair of the NGO CSW NY, and has participated in the executive committee for the NGO CSW for many years. She expects that this is her last year doing it. She's been interested in the UN since 4<sup>th</sup> grade. She got to know Ella Baker when writing a book. She later worked on the documentary film, "Fundis: The Story of Ella Baker." She was an English professor and later became Soon-Young Yoon's Vice Chair, who really changed NGO CSW. Now all the advocacy work is done in the 5 regions, not just Vienna and Geneva. After 12 years in this work, she is thinking about the future of NGOs at CSW, and how NGOs can do that work better. There are 197 member states who make the decisions. The NGOs do not make the decisions. UN entities do a lot of the work of the UN, like UN Women and UNICEF. There are over 6,000 ECOSOC NGOs.

Interestingly, UN Women would sometimes have restrictions on what they could do, so she would get asked about getting certain work done through the NGOs. NGOs are on the ground. NGOs have more freedom. We often have more expertise than many member states. Some Missions only have two people and have to cover all the issues of the UN and so women will be slighted. NGOs also have more courage and morality sometimes. We have to work together with the UN, member states, and NGOs to move the agenda. With Soon-Young, they created an advocacy booklet. She and Soon-Young met with Peggy Kerry a lot. She was frustrated that she knows other ambassadors more than our own US ambassador. Hard to get the name of the delegates, and sometimes those delegates don't know anything about the UN or the CSW. Samantha Power invited them once, only once. Ambassador Thomas Greenfield has also had very little contact.

There's a right wing that spends a lot of time attacking the CSW. Some of the things the right has done during the CSW is pretty scary. For example, there was a protest at UNICEF that led to a person beating up a counter protestor.

Advice on how to influence the outcome document. She tried for years and got nowhere. Last year she met with the commission and admitted failure. She says she tried everything with no success, so she asked for advice. She was told- "Your timing is lousy. Get it ready in October. Send the recommendations to the Secretary General in October." They said to list no more than 3 recommendations, she sent 6. They also suggested she send it to the CSW bureau (5 countries, 1

head), then send it to every member state. You can get all the member state emails if you know the UN blue book. They said the length was too much. Keep it short. They asked, “why do you spend so much time with western countries?” They are right, we tend to have friends there. Little states have votes too. Remember that first language is not always English. Try to also do French and Spanish. So, she followed all that they said. And then she did briefs – put in precedent language. Look at CEDAW, old outcome docs, resolutions, quote them when what you want to be passed has already been passed. She also said she put in good practices (show what country X did, and show another can do it too). For example, they pointed to Kenya with the climate change education k-12 program, with a link. Show laws from other countries. They may not know about the laws. This strategy brought success. Most of what they recommended got in the outcome document. The only one that didn’t get in is asking for the North to pay for more of the climate change destruction. She worked a lot on land use and women’s ownership. She managed to get widows in the recommendation.

Every outcome document is reviewed five years later. How can we push implementation and accountability through using good things in the outcome document? The problem is people often forget. We can take things from a previous year and say, “You need to implement x,” and show the best practices.

### **Questions and Comments for Susan O’Malley**

- Other countries, like Brazil, implement polices and take action after UN agreements. It is amazing we don’t have as much access to power in the US.
- It’s so difficult to get access to the US Mission and find out who the delegates are. Is this also about US attitude toward the UN? We’ve never ratified CEDAW. It feels like the UN is for other countries, not for the US. And can you explain the difference between treaties and outcome documents?
  - When it is local government, it is so much easier. Getting it done on a larger scale is harder. Last year, one organization got a resolution through the general assembly on widows. The Global Fund for Women – worked with the African Union. Resolution 72. There is still the need for implementation, but at least the resolution exists. Working with the US does depend on who is in office. In this country we are in a fight for democracy.
- How many NGOs that are part of ECOSOC are part of the US? – not sure of number
- Graduate Women International was invited to the Mexican embassy. At the end they signed a MOU with Mexico, Canada, and US. Today she was with a Canadian friend who said that every day there is a Canadian briefing that they can go to. Can the US have daily briefings where we can talk to the US?
  - There are thousands of women in the city right now for the CSW. Is there any news coverage? No. The press is only interested in the Security Council. She tried to get the student newspapers to cover it.
  - Canada does have a great mission.
- Mary Rose talked about sending delegates information about previous agreements and finding their contact information through the State Department. Hang out at the Vienna café, look for the “D” on a nametag and ask what they are here for. Have your statement or issue ready to connect with the delegates.

- NGO CSW NY came out with a statement and apparently it had some controversy. The phrase “in all their diversity” and LGBTQI caused some uproar at NGO CSW Geneva. Another person offered clarification that it wasn’t everyone who was against it, and nothing came out of it.
  - Susan says that they struggled with it, but settled on women in all their diversity. LGBTQI does make people go crazy, but you can put it in the recommendation and let them go crazy. You need a realistic strategy. We need friends in the US Mission and we need to figure out how to do that. Sofija Korac is good. Foster that relationship. During the Trump years it was awful with visas and stuff. Laurie Phipps helped her a lot (from the mission) but the meetings were secret.
  - The NY schools don’t really talk about the UN beyond some basics.
- Sofija Korac wanted to come to today’s event, but they are negotiating this afternoon. There’s a lack of number of people who work on gender issues at the State and at the mission to work with us.
- Discussion of the difficulties of working with the US Mission.
- One thing we can do – is getting closer to the US Mission.
- Working with the delegates. Let’s influence who is picked.
- Kristy talked about how at the climate change UN events, they organize immediately after the last meeting and have all the speakers and talking points 6 months in advance.
- Comment about Unaccompanied minors, child labor, - pressing US issue. Convention on the rights of the child. We want to create a real wave to make change here.
  - The NGO Migration is an excellent organization.
  - At Beijing conference, NGOs were in the room.
  - Another idea – get experts in a room near the negotiations so they are available.
- Let’s continue this conversation online to strategize long term.

Susan closed the meeting/event at 5:30pm.