



Dear Inner Wheel Friends around the world,

It is my pleasure to send you my report on the activities of the Vienna “NGO Committee on Ageing” and the “NGO Committee on the Status of Women” in which I represent International Inner Wheel.

NGO Committees form the link between the UN and civil society. However they are not involved in decision-making and or policies of the UN. They can submit statements in which they call upon UN Member States to effect certain changes in their laws and/or policies.

The **Vienna NGO Committee on Ageing** advocates on behalf of older people’s rights and stands for the empowerment of older people. The Committee promotes ageing issues into UN and EU programmes.

Older persons need an internationally agreed upon Convention to change the way they are looked at.

We need strong mechanisms to protect Human Rights of Older Persons and it is important to change our mindset. Older people are not a group of ill, frail, helpless and forgetful persons, they have the right to live in dignity, to receive all the attention they need and must be protected against physical, psychological and sexual violence, financial abuse and neglect. Violence can lead to devastating health problems and can even lead to death.

Regrettably it is quite a hidden problem and has not only to do with ageism and gender-sexism but also with disability, marital- and social status.

With lockdowns and reduced care, violence and abuse are on the rise and particularly women are more often exposed to elderly abuse.

The Vienna NGO Committee on Ageing is monitoring and participating in intergovernmental deliberations and actions, and provides necessary language in key documents on a global level.

The following themes are part of our work and discussions:

- Human Rights
- Social and emotional isolation,
- Intergenerational perspectives
- Communication and Digitalisation

Communications-technology for older people is quite a topical subject. In 2019 the Committee initiated a project on “The use of very advanced technologies and Artificial Intelligence in personal support and care services for older persons living in their own homes”.

Many older persons are not familiar with the benefits of digital technology and are rather afraid to use these systems.

In the framework of the celebrations of the “International Day of older People” on October 1st 2021, the Committee is planning a forum on this topic.

The main purpose of the **Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women** is promoting gender equality, women's rights and the empowerment of women. In 1995 the Fourth UN World Conference on Women took place in Beijing and was a turning point in the global agenda for Women's Rights. 189 Nations adopted the "Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action", a historic document regarding equal rights, freedom and opportunities for women worldwide.

The Platform of Action covers 12 critical areas of concern: poverty, education and training, health, violence against women, armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, media, the environment and the girl child. The Platform sets an agenda for Governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector to safeguard women's human rights, and to ensure that gender is taken into account in all national, regional and international policies and programmes.

Progress on implementation of the Declaration and Platform is reviewed every five years through reports by States, UN regional commissions, and a global report by the Secretary-General. All this is badly needed as even today in 52 countries equal rights are still not part of the constitution.

This year, during the annual Meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York, the Vienna Committee is hosting a virtual event to commemorate the Beijing Platform.

Another highlight is the global "16 Days Campaign of Activism against Gender-Based Violence" which every year runs from November 25th, the International Day of the Elimination of Violence against Women, till December 10th, Human Rights Day.

On this occasion the Committee regularly organizes events to raise awareness of the fact that violence is the largest obstacle in the realization of human rights for women and their participation in society. Violence is the most serious social mechanism to keep women in a subordinated position.

Due to the Corona lockdown the UN had to close their offices and buildings, which meant that until today there were no "live" NGO Meetings. However, thanks to modern technologies, virtual Meetings of the Vienna NGO Committees took place.

Ceja Gregor-Hu
IIW UN Representative
Vienna, March 2021