

IFSW General Meeting and World Conference 2014

Words; **Morel Caissie**, MSW, RSW, CASW President

Canada has been a long-time member of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) which was founded through the initiative of seven countries in 1928. We remain staunch supporters of this global organization striving for social justice, human rights, and social development through the promotion of social work, best practice models and the facilitation of international cooperation. At the General Meeting held concurrently with the Joint World Conference on Social Work and Social Development, Melbourne, Australia, July 5th to July 12, 2014, I accepted to serve on the IFSW Executive as President for North America for the next two years. I look forward to representing the social work community in North America to the best of my abilities in this international forum.

New Members and New Executive Committee of IFSW

Social work organizations from the following countries were accepted by the General Assembly as new members of IFSW: Egypt, Grenada, Mexico, Morocco, and Romania. The current membership numbers over 800 thousand social workers coming from 116 countries. The results of the election for the Executive Committee and Officers of IFSW are as follows:

Ruth Stark	Scotland	Global President
Eva Ponce de Leon	Philippines	Global Treasurer
Mariko Kimura	Japan	First Vice President
Daniel Asiedu	Ghana	President -- Africa
Noel Muridzo	Zimbabwe	Member-at-Large --Africa
Mariko Kimura	Japan	President- -Asia-Pacific
Rose Henderson	New Zealand	Member-at-Large-- Asia-Pacific
Cristina Martins	Portugal	President-- Europe
Salome Namicheishvilli	Georgia	Member-at-Large-- Europe
Morel Caissie	Canada	President-- North America
Darrell Wheeler	USA	Member-at-Large-- North America
Silvana Martinez	Uruguay	President -- Latin America & Caribbean
Rodolpho Martinez	Argentina	Member-at-Large-- Latin America & Caribbean

North American Report to IFSW

The presidents of the five regions represented in IFSW were tasked with presenting their respective reports to the General Meeting, highlighting activities and projects of interest to the global social work community. Links to regional organizations and regional activities, membership development, human rights and social justice issues were the main focus of each regional report. You can read the North American report which includes actives of CASW, at http://cdn.ifsw.org/assets/ifsw_54944-10.pdf.

Global Agenda for Social Work

The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development was front and centre of the discussions during the general meeting as well as the focus for the World Conference theme. The Global Agenda is the product of a three-year collaborative initiative undertaken by the IFSW; the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), a community of schools and educators in social work, speaking on behalf of 2,000 schools of social work and 500,000 students; and the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), a global, non-governmental organisation representing tens of thousands of organisations around the world active in programmes to promote social welfare, social development, and social justice. All three bodies were founded in 1928 and have held formal consultative status for many decades with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and other UN and related agencies.

In preparing the Global Agenda, there was extensive consultation with social workers, social work educators and social development practitioners. In 2010, at the joint conference in Hong Kong, the Global Agenda received overwhelming support from approximately 3,000 delegates. Consultation culminated in four specific commitments for the Global Agenda:

- *Promoting social and economic equalities*
- *Promoting the dignity and worth of peoples*
- *Working toward environmental sustainability*
- *Strengthening recognition of the importance of human relationships*

Global Observatory Report 2014

Regional observatories were set up as a mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of The Global Agenda Commitments. The purpose is to gather evidence about the activities of social workers, educators, and social development practitioners, who support the implementation of the Global Agenda around the world. The reporting is structured around the four themes of The Global Agenda, starting with ***Promoting Social and Economic Equalities*** in 2014.

One of my duties as a member of the executive committee of IFSW for the last two years was the coordination of the regional observatory for North America. You can find our submission as part of the *Global Observatory Report* that was published as a supplement to the *International Social Work Journal* and launched at the Melbourne World Conference. Over the next two years, CASW will work in collaboration with NASW in the United States on the next regional observatory. This observatory will relate to the implementation of the second commitment – ***Promoting the Dignity and Worth of Peoples***, to be reported on at the next World Conference in Seoul, South Korea, scheduled for June 2016.

Global Definition of Social Work

After an extensive consultation process spanning four years, the review of the ***Global Definition of the Social Work Profession*** culminated in a new definition as follows:

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and

indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.

Policy on Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression

IFSW adopted this policy on the grounds that we know of 76 nations with laws that criminalize people on the basis of sexual identity and 5 nations that have the death penalty as the possible result of consensual adult same-sex activities. Same-sex behaviour is still often characterized by many as either pathological or sinful. There is no moral compass or any belief that can justify or legitimize discrimination and violence against any human being. It is incumbent upon IFSW to uphold our ethical commitment to human rights by clearly stating our position on issues affecting the rights of LGBTQ people who continue to be marginalized and oppressed all over the world.

Guiding Principles for Social Workers Working with Others to Identify and Protect Children From All Forms of Sexual Abuse

This comprehensive policy statement was developed in response to growing public and political concern about the increase in abuse connected with the internet (grooming and pornography) as well as the increased vulnerability of young people following natural disasters or in conflict situations. These guidelines are applicable for all social workers in whatever setting or part of the world they are working in.

Review of IFSW Constitution and Bylaws

A sub-committee of the Executive of which I will be a member, has been tasked with a constitutional review. Following a consultation process with all member countries, a draft proposal will be developed for adoption at the next General Assembly, June 2016.

Meetings of IFSW Executive Committee

Meetings of the Executive will generally be by teleconferences with the use of Skype when feasible. The next face-to-face meeting will be in Switzerland where the Committee will also be attending Social Work Day Celebrations at our UN offices in Geneva on March 17, 2015.

Joint World Conference

The theme for the Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development 2014 was ***Promoting Social and Economic Equality: Responses from Social Work and Social Development.*** The joint conference was organized by IFSW, IASSW, and ICSW and hosted by the University of Melbourne. The 2000 delegates at the conference had the opportunity to attend ten plenary sessions with simultaneous translation in five languages. There were also more than 70 separate workshops to choose from over a four-day period. Participants had the opportunity to do field visits throughout Melbourne and view a listing of over 300 e-posters. The conference was a huge success. Organizers are already preparing for the next World Conference to be held in Seoul, South Korea.

Finally, I wish to invite you to visit our website at ifsw.org to learn more about the important work and contribution of social work and social development in building a “society for all” wherein every individual has an active role to play within a fair and just world. I encourage everyone to join the IFSW Friends Programme which gives access to *IFSW Connect*, the largest online community of social workers, offering members the ability to share, discover, and learn. This site enables social workers to create professional networks with peers, form discussion groups, engage and share resources with colleagues from around the world as well as create and/or participate in social work or social justice campaigns. The Friends Programme provides free online access to the *International Social Work Journal* and contains all articles dating back to 1959.

Morel Caissie, as Member-at-Large for North America on the Executive Committee of the IFSW, represented CASW at the General Meeting and the Joint World Conference on Social Work and Social Development in Melbourne, Australia.