



Karama Delegation to the 58th Session UN Commission on the Status of Women

Launched by the UN in February 1947, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global policymaking body of the UN on gender equality. It contributed to the drafting of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948, and wrote many of the early conventions on women's rights, culminating in CEDAW in 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. With UN Women as its Secretariat, CSW is responsible for monitoring, reviewing, appraising progress and problems and maintaining public awareness of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. See the official web pages for CSW58 for more details: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw58-2014>

The Commission meets in annual sessions for two weeks every March to address gender inequality. The CSW session assembles representatives of Member States at the UN Headquarters in New York, where they work together to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards, and formulate global policies to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women worldwide. The Member States' representatives may include ministers for women's affairs, heads of national mechanisms for gender equality, senior officials from other ministries, and parliamentarians. NGOs may send delegates as observers, with the opportunity to participate through regional NGO caucuses and opportunities to deliver oral statements or to speak on expert panels.

Attending CSW since 2007, Karama delegates successfully revived the dormant Middle East NGO Caucus and presented oral statements on the UN floor to members of the Commission and UN Member States. Karama delegates have distributed policy papers and fact sheets to UN agencies and government representatives. Karama has coordinated several panels at CSW, including one on the role of women in decision-making in the Arab region, which was heavily attended by governmental and NGO representatives from across the globe. Karama has held several conferences, including one assessing 30 years of CEDAW, 15 years since the Beijing Platform for Action, and 10 years of the MDGs in the Arab region. Karama delegates' recommendations have been considered by the Commission to be incorporated into its set of Agreed Conclusions, which are presented to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the UN General Assembly as an annual set of recommendations for action.

This year is CSW58, and its priority theme will be **"Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls."** In the Millennium Declaration, governments confirmed their resolve to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to promote sustainable development. Millennium Development Goal 3 (MDG 3) set three specific goals for gender equality in the realms of education, national parliaments, and labor force, while MDG 5 targeted improvements in maternal and reproductive health.

CSW is not a treaty-monitoring body like the CEDAW committee, nor does it have an investigative role like the UN Special Rapporteurs. However, CSW does monitor political and social incidents through its “Communication Procedure,” which serves as a means for women to submit complaints directly to the Commission on individual cases and discriminatory laws. Complaints and allegations of violations against women which are directed at a particular state are considered by a CSW Working Group. They also consider government replies to these allegations. The Working Group submits a report to the CSW bringing its attention to communications which appear to reveal a consistent pattern of injustice and discriminatory practices against women. CSW may take note of the report and/or make recommendations to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for action in relation to these issues and incidents raised in these communications.

Role of Karama’s delegation at CSW

Karama’s delegation each year takes part in CSW through partnership with the Alliance for Arab Women, an ECOSOC-accredited NGO, which ensures access to the UN grounds to observe the official CSW sessions.

A key role for the delegation at CSW will be to share recommendations and analysis from **‘The Arab Regional Consultation on the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda: Towards Reconfirming Rights and Redefining Goals from a Gender Perspective,’** held by Karama and UN Women in Amman during 11-12 February 2013. The participants included NGO leaders and policymakers from 9 Arab countries, and issued a final report with 9 recommendations for development goals beyond 2015.

To this end, Karama will nominate representatives from the delegation for the opportunities to make an oral statement or to participate on the interactive expert panels held during the official sessions of CSW. Karama’s delegates will disseminate their recommendations for the post-2015 sustainable development agenda at the meetings of the Middle East NGO Caucus and in meetings with UN officials and government delegations:

1. **Making an oral statement:** Oral statements may be made during the official sessions of CSW by a limited number of NGOs. The number of oral statements to be delivered at the session will depend on the time available. The CSW prefers that oral statements are given by an individual on behalf of groups of organizations, caucuses or coalitions. Typically the CSW selects a statement submitted by the Middle East NGO Caucus, and others as time permits. Statements may be no longer than three minutes, approximately the length of two double-spaced pages.
2. **Speaking on the Interactive Expert Panels:** A limited number of NGOs will be able to make an oral intervention during the Interactive Expert Panels, held as part of the official sessions. The interventions by NGO representatives must take the form of comments or questions to the experts on the panels. Interventions are not to exceed three minutes. There will be three Interactive Expert Panels in the Official Sessions during the week Karama’s delegation will be at CSW:
 - Panel I: Challenges and Achievements in the Implementation of MDGs for

Women and Girls (Wednesday, 12 March, 10 am)

- Panel II: Accountability and participation of women and girls in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (Wednesday, 12 March, 3 pm)
 - Panel III: Emerging Issue: Women's access to productive resources (Thursday, 13 March, 3 p.m.)
3. **Reception to launch *Arab Woman's Rights in the Balance of Justice*:** Karama will host an evening reception to celebrate the launch of the book, written by Dr Haifa Abou Ghazaleh with contributions by Hibaaq Osman of Karama and Maya Morsy of the UNDP.
 4. **Meeting with government missions:** If desired, Karama will contact your government's UN mission in advance, and request a meeting during the week in New York to discuss the recommendations for the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. These meetings can also be used as an opportunity to meet with each government's UN representatives about seeking the removal of reservations on CEDAW, ratifying the Optional Protocol, implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325, etc. These government missions will be invited to the reception.
 5. **Monitoring government statements during CSW sessions:** It is always illuminating to observe the official sessions, which open with each government issuing a statement reporting its achievements on the priority theme of the CSW session.
 6. **Meeting with UN agencies:** Karama will set up meetings for interested delegates with the Special Rapporteur on VAW or the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, to share information on the problem of VAW and trafficking in delegates' countries, and see if there are opportunities for them to arrange a visit by the Special Rapporteur to delegates' countries. Karama can also set up meetings with officials of UN Women and possibly the UN Security Council.
 7. **Participating in the Middle East NGO Caucus:** The regional caucuses are organized by the NGO CSW Committee. Each regional caucus typically meets twice during each week of the CSW session. This year, each caucus will be permitted to select two people from ECOSOC NGOs to observe the negotiations on the Agreed Conclusions. Also, the Middle East Caucus will likely draft or review an oral statement during its meetings, and select the speaker to deliver it if the statement is selected.
 8. **Organizing and attending parallel and side events** that take place during the CSW session, organized by Member States, UN agencies, and NGOs
 9. **Monitoring the daily Linkage Caucus for NGOs:** Karama delegates who speak English should attend the daily linkage caucus for NGOs, to get important updates on negotiations of the Agreed Conclusions (CSW's official outcome document).