



Appendix 16

Zonta International and the UN¹

(updated 13 October 2018)

1919: Confederation of Zonta Clubs founded

As a classified service organization for women in the period immediately after World War I, the Confederation from the outset recognized international peace as an important means of improving the status of women.

1920: League of Nations founded

Founded as part of the peace treaties after World War I, the League of Nations aimed to prevent any future world war through collective security, disarmament, and settling international disputes through arbitration. USA never joined the League. The League failed its primary purpose of preventing wars. It lasted 26 years.

1930: The Confederation becomes Zonta International

In 1930, the Confederation of Zonta Clubs became Zonta International and added this point to its Objects: "To work for the advancement of understanding, goodwill and peace through a world of fellowship of executive women in business and professions united in the Zonta ideal of service".

By the 1930s and 1940s, world peace had become the single most important issue for Zonta members. In 1936, Zonta committed itself to "becoming definitely identified in the movement for international peace".

Becoming involved with the UN after World War II, Zontians have worked to promote justice and universal respect for human rights and understanding among the peoples of the world, to assure world peace.

1945: UN Charter signed

¹ Research compiled by Eva Nielsen from resources listed at the end of this document.

The UN Charter was signed at the United Nations Conference on International Organization, commonly known as the San Francisco conference, held from 25 April–26 June 1945.

Of the 50 countries represented, women had voting rights in only 30 of them. As a consequence only four women were signatories to the Charter. Women from outside Europe and North America played a pivotal role in ensuring that women were explicitly mentioned in the United Nations Charter. Women delegates from Brazil, Dominican Republic, Uruguay as well as women participants from Mexico, Venezuela and Australia promoted feminist views that demanded an explicit reference to women's rights in the Charter. New research reveals that the Brazilian delegate Dr. Bertha Lutz was the prime mover.

Apart from the official government delegations, members of a great number of non-governmental organizations were present. As the conference started before World War II was over, many networks and NGOs in Europe were unable to send representatives. Travel to the American west coast from other parts of the world was also difficult and costly. However, some governments appointed NGO representatives in their delegations, including a few from women's organizations

The United States State Department arranged for a simultaneous Women's Conference, sponsored by fifteen women's organizations; Zonta International was the only service club included. This conference urged women to begin a "campaign of education" on peace and its implementation. Zonta International President Jessie Ekins (1944–46) supported the Zonta delegation of Elizabeth Gist Dozier (Zonta International President 1950–52) and Georgia Boucher to the conference (de Langis, p.19).

1945: Opening Session of the United Nations

Elizabeth Gist Dozier (Zonta International President 1950–52) was a Zontian delegate at this session held in San Francisco in October (de Langis, p. 21).

1946: First session of UN General Assembly

The first session of the United Nations General Assembly opened on 10 January 1946 at Central Hall in London, United Kingdom. During the session, Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt, who was now appointed a delegate read an Open Letter to the Women of the World from the 17 women attending the session, expressing the hope that women's involvement in the UN would grow, and calling on governments to encourage women to be active in national and international affairs and in building peace. This letter was the first formal articulation of women's voices in the UN. At the meeting, a Sub-commission on the Status of Women was created under the Human Rights Commission. Many women delegates and representatives of non-governmental organizations believed nevertheless that a separate body specifically dedicated to women's issues was necessary. The first chairman of the Sub-commission, Bodil Begtrup (Denmark) also requested the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for a change to full commission status.

1946: Commission on the Status of Women

On 21 June 1946, the Sub-Commission formally became the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), dedicated to ensuring women's equality and to promoting women's rights. Its mandate was to "prepare recommendations and reports to the Economic and Social Council on promoting women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields" and to

make recommendations “on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the fields of women’s rights”.

Shortly thereafter, the Section on the Status of Women of the United Nations Secretariat (which would become the Division for the Advancement of Women in 1978) was established in the Human Rights Division of the United Nations to provide secretarial functions.

The UN Charter was a pioneering document in women’s rights. This probably would not have happened without the involvement and active lobbying of women’s organizations. They were clear about their aims and knowledgeable about international collaboration. They had access to the inter-governmental meetings and were experienced in dealing with official representatives. The geographical breadth of the demands for women’s rights was important to prevent them from being brushed aside (Forum for Development Studies, No. 1-2008, Torild Skard: How were the Equal Rights of Men and Women included in the Charter of UN? (Short History of the CSW, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/CSW60YRS/CSWbriefhistory.pdf>).

1946: Early relationship with UN

“Action for World Peace”, Zonta’s 1946–47 Program, was adopted. Education of women has always been Zonta’s special aim, and international peace became its mission in 1946.

Until this point, Zonta’s service projects had been highly informal. They were not mandatory, and most were local. At the 1943 convention, Zonta International President Katherine Maddux and other Zontians began to push for adoption of a single biennial international service project “participated in by every Zonta club wherever it is located”.

As a result, the first formal international program, which included support of UN Activities in Zonta’s policy for 1946-47, was adopted at the 1946 convention. The program was called “Action for World Peace”, which was also the motto for Zonta International President Louise C. Grace’s biennium 1946-48. The program encouraged Zontians to serve as citizens of their own countries and as citizens of the world by endorsing an overall policy that would include factors leading to world peace.

Zonta International President Louise Grace (1946-48) was Zonta’s delegate to many conferences, and Zonta made careful studies of the work and progress of the UN. 1947, the chairman of Zonta’s International Relations Committee wrote, “We have pinned our faith on the work of the United Nations, and our interests should center on every stage of their extensive programs”.

Looking at the purposes of the United Nations, expressed in its Charter, the parallel structure of the two organizations can easily be seen. Peace and security are the primary functions of the UN; other UN goals are the struggle for human rights and understanding, as well as improvement of economic, social, cultural and humanitarian matters; they all are familiar goals to Zontians worldwide.

1947: First meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women

The meeting was held in Lake Success, New York.

1948: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Among the earliest accomplishments of CSW was ensuring gender-neutral language in the draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration, adopted by the General Assembly on 10 December 1948, reaffirms that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” and that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion,...birth or other status”.

1963: Roster Level status with ECOSOC

In 1962, Zonta started supporting the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees and was granted Roster Level status by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), officially recognizing Zonta as an UN-affiliated NGO.

During the 1960s, Zonta International worked to advance the status of women through close cooperation with the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

Helvi Sipilä, Zonta Club of Helsinki I, was Finland’s delegate to the UN Commission on the Status of Women from 1960 to 1968, and again from 1971 to 1972. From 1963 to 1966 she was vice-chairman, and in 1967, chairman of the commission. She was also United Nations special rapporteur for Family Planning and the Status of Women. Helvi Sipilä served as District XIII governor 1963–64, Zonta International Second Vice president 1964–66, First Vice-President 1966–68, and Zonta International President 1968–70.

1967: Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

On 7 November, the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was finally adopted by the General Assembly. While the Declaration was an important step in securing the legal foundation of women’s equality, its impact was more limited, because the reporting procedures for the Declaration’s implementation were voluntary, and the level of response from Governments was low.

1968: Helena Benitez, Zonta Club of Manila, presided over the CSW session in December 1968.

1969: Consultative Status Category II ²

Zonta International celebrated its golden anniversary in 1969, and its status with UN ECOSOC was elevated from Roster level to Consultative Status Category II (see 1985 below). Zonta’s Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws are inextricably linked with those of the UN, and for that reason Zonta was one of the first organizations to be granted consultative status.

1971: Consultative Status with UNESCO

In this year, Zonta International was granted Consultative Status with UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

² This status is mentioned for the first time in the Zonta International Rules of Procedure in 1969 and then in the editions published in 1982 (p. 60), 1992 (p. 42), and 1992 (p. 42). The status category changed in 1985 and again in 1996 (see below). The 2018-2010 Rules refer to Zonta International’s status with ECOSOC, UNESCO and other UN entities.

1972: Consultative Status with UNICEF

In this year, Zonta International gained consultative Status with UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund).

During the 1960s and 1970s, membership of the United Nations expanded dramatically, due to the number of newly independent nations. The concerns of the developing nations were on the agenda of the organization, including a greater awareness of discrimination against women. The international women's movements influenced the approaches to women and the development of the UN. The Commission on the Status of Women increasingly focused on the role of women in development, both as beneficiaries and as agents of change.

In 1972, to mark its 25th Anniversary, the Commission recommended that 1975 be designated International Women's Year—an idea introduced by Romania on behalf of the Women's International Democratic Federation. Its observance was intended to remind the international community that discrimination against women, entrenched in law and deeply rooted cultural beliefs, was a persistent problem in much of the world. It would also encourage Governments, NGOs and individuals to increase their efforts to promote equality between men and women and to enhance their recognition of women's contributions to development. The United Nations General Assembly endorsed the Commission's recommendation on International Women's Year and added a third theme to those of equality and development proposed by the Commission—the recognition of women's increasing contribution to the strengthening of world peace—thereby setting a three-tier agenda for the advancement of women

1972: Helvi Sipilä was appointed Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, the first woman to have held this post.

1972: Zonta International UN Committee

Since 1946, Zonta International's resolutions and program themes have expressed support for the work of the United Nations and Zonta clubs have been urged to publicize UN activities. During the 1970s, Zonta International expanded and strengthened its United Nations program, creating a Zonta International United Nations Committee in 1972, followed by recommending that districts and clubs appoint UN Committees.

1975: First UN World Conference on Women

The first UN Conference on Women was held in Mexico City, Mexico, in International Women's Year. 133 governments participated, while 6,000 NGO representatives attended a parallel forum, The International Women's Year Tribune.

The conference defined a World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year, which offered a comprehensive set of guidelines for the advancement of women through 1985.

Past International President (1968-70) Helvi Sipilä, Zonta Club of Helsinki I, was the Secretary General of the conference, and Eleanor Jammal (Zonta International President 1974-76) and Harriette Yeckel (Zonta International President 1972-1974 and chairman of Zonta International UN Committee) participated as Zonta's official delegates. In addition, the official delegates from many countries were Zontians. Zonta was now truly on the world stage.

After her term as Zonta International President, Eleanor Jammal continued as chairman of the Zonta International UN Committee and attended a specially designated Zonta Day at the UN in these years.

1975: ILO Consultative Status

This year ILO granted Zonta International consultative status (de Langis p.73).

1976-1985: Decade for Women

Following the 1975 conference, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution establishing 1976-85 as the Decade for Women, to demonstrate that women could contribute to solving not only their own problems, but also those of the world. Thus, the major themes of the Decade for Women were equality, development, and peace; the subthemes were education, employment, and health. Two major United Nations Conferences marked the middle and the end of the Decade for Women: Copenhagen 1980, and Nairobi 1985.

1976: Voluntary Fund

The UN created this fund to provide financial and technical assistance to innovative programs and strategies that promote women's human rights, political participation and economic security (see below: UNIFEM)

1976-82: Colombian Health Centers Project

Zonta International, in cooperation with UNICEF and the Colombian government, funded ten health centers as part of this project.

1979: INSTRAW

The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) was established, following the General Assembly's recommendation in 1975.

1980: Zonta – UN resolution

At Zonta International's 1980 convention in Washington, D.C., the delegates adopted several resolutions, including:

Recognizing that the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and the Elimination of Discrimination against Women promulgate principles directed toward improving the legal, political, economic and professional status of women, be it resolved

- That Zonta Clubs urge women to accept their full participating responsibilities in government at all levels, including serving in appointive and elective offices and the endorsement and support of qualified women in policy making positions
- That Zonta International, a nongovernmental organization holding consultative status with ECOSOC, UNESCO, UNICEF, AND ILO, support the purposes of the United Nations.

1980: Second UN World Conference on Women

The second UN Conference on Women marked the mid-point of the United Nations Decade for Women and attracted 145 member states to Copenhagen. Over 8,000 participants from 187 countries attended the NGO Forum to discuss the major themes of the conference and to network actively.

In addition to reaffirming the importance of the CEDAW (see below), the conference aimed to review progress in implementing the goals of the World Conference of the International Women's Year and to update its Plan of Action. It focused on three areas of urgent concern for women: employment, health and education.

A Program of Action called for stronger national measures to ensure women's ownership and control of property, as well as improvements in protecting women's rights to inheritance, child custody and nationality. Adoption of this Program of Action witnessed angry exchanges between West and East. The media reported all the disagreements and altercations, the Arab walkouts when Israelis spoke, the security manhandling of Bolivians who attempted to storm the conference, and the NGOs from the Forum who wanted a voice.

Zonta International, as an NGO with Consultative Status with ECOSOC, was officially represented by Doris Vaughn, Zonta's UN Observer in New York. Zontians were members of many national delegations: Austria, Australia, Belgium, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ghana, Guatemala, Kenya, Philippines, Republic of Korea and the United States.

The plenary meeting of the General Assembly conducted a General Debate in which every nation spoke of the conditions of its women. The first political notes came when North Korea began vilifying South Korea. *The Zontian* reported that Zontian, Dr. Mary Lee, a member of the Zonta Club of Seoul, former Region I representative, and head of the South Korean Delegation, "answered every affront in a calm, effective, magnificent speech" (*The Zontian*, Volume 60, No. 3, October 1980).

Zonta's United Nations observers in New York served on the NGO planning committee for the NGO Forum. An official statement on the Zonta International Amelia Earhart Fellowships was circulated to all delegations and Amelia Earhart folders and applications were distributed widely. Several countries showed an interest in having a Zonta club. A Zonta box in the NGO Lounge gave opportunity for contact with Zontians, as well as receiving documents and invitations.

The Zonta Club of Copenhagen II organized a booth at the conference venue, the Bella Centre, where members sold more than 2,000 scarfs, designed and made for the occasion by Inge Toft, a member of Zonta Club of Copenhagen II. When Past International President Helvi Sipilä, UN Assistant Secretary-General, was visiting Copenhagen Zontians in the early spring of 1980, she expressed her wish to locate a manufacturer willing to produce, under franchise of the Fund for the Decade for Women, an article carrying the Decade symbol. Overnight, Inge Toft produced a lovely scarf with the reproduction of the Decade symbol on each quarter. It was sold for c. USD\$13.00, with USD\$1.00 of that donated to the Voluntary Fund.

Members of the two Copenhagen Zonta clubs hosted two evening events for Zontians who attended the conference: a reception at Danske Bank headquarters in the center of Copenhagen, and a visit to the home and studio of Sculptor Helen Schou, member of Zonta Club of Copenhagen I.

Zonta clubs throughout the world continued to prepare reports on the status of women, among them “Irish Women; Their role in a Changing Society”, “Women in Hong Kong”, “Status of Women in the Common Market Countries”.

1979–1981: CEDAW

The drafting of CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) was encouraged by the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year. The World Conference of the International Women's Year, Mexico City, 1975, had called for a Convention on the elimination of discrimination against women, with effective procedures for its implementation.

The General Assembly urged the Commission on the Status of Women to finish its work by 1976, so that the Convention would be completed in time for the 1980 Copenhagen mid-decade review conference.

Although suggestions were made to delay completion of the text for another year, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the General Assembly in 1979 by votes of 130 to none, with 10 abstentions. In resolution 34/180, in which the General Assembly adopted the Convention, the Assembly expressed the hope that the Convention would come into force at an early date and requested that the Secretary-General present the text of the Convention to the mid-decade World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women.

At a special ceremony on 17 July 1980 at the Copenhagen Conference, representatives of 64 countries signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Twenty ratifications were required to bring it into effect.

On 3 September 1981, 30 days after the twentieth member state had ratified it, the Convention entered into force – faster than any previous human rights convention had done (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/history.htm>).

As of 2019, it had been ratified by 187 of the 193 UN member states and is the convention with the least number of reservations. While the United States have signed the convention, they remain the only industrialized Western nation that has not ratified CEDAW. Similarly, Palau has signed but not ratified the Convention. Iran, Somalia, Sudan, and Tonga are not yet signatories.

In 1981, the second woman to achieve a top position in the United Nations, Leticia Shahani, Zonta Club of Manilla, Philippines, was appointed by UN Secretary General, Kurt Waldheim, as Assistant Secretary General to head the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in Vienna. She served from 1981 to 1986.

1985: Third UN World Conference on Women

The third UN Conference on Women was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 15 to 26 July 1985. Its purpose was to “review and appraise the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: equality, development and peace”. The Conference also served to identify remaining obstacles, set priorities, and establish strategies to reach the Decade’s goals by the year 2000.

Participants in the conference included 1,900 delegations from 157 member states, representatives of the UN Secretariat, regional commissions, eight specialized agencies, 17 intergovernmental organizations, four national liberation movements, and 163 NGOs (see below)

Many have described the conference as “the birth of global feminism”. Realizing that the goals of the Mexico City Conference had not been adequately met, the 157 participating governments adopted the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies to the Year 2000. The document broke new ground by declaring all issues to be women’s issues.

(<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/CSW60YRS/CSWbriefhistory.pdf>)

Zontian Leticia Shahani, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, served as the Secretary-General of the Nairobi Conference. Zontians from many countries served as official delegates to the conference.

Zonta Study Tour 1985

Zontians attending the conference had prepared themselves through a three-week study tour of the Zonta clubs and projects in Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Kenya. The Zonta clubs of Freetown, Abidjan, Dakar, and Nairobi greeted the visiting Zontians and led them through lectures and workshops presenting the problems facing Africa. The African clubs actively supported such projects as vocational schools, day care centers and homes, facilities for the disabled, obtaining medical equipment, and providing nutritional education. Thus, Zontians on the study tour had time to be acquainted with the problems facing Africa and they were well prepared to discuss issues with conference participants, of whom over half were women from Africa.

Zonta and the NGO Forum 1985

NGOs hosted a meeting parallel to the Conference called “Forum 85” from 10 to 19 July 1985. The NGO Forum was held at University of Nairobi and attracted around 12,000 participants from all over the world, with many women from Africa, in particular Kenya. The Forum consisted of a diverse series of workshops, panel discussions, films, and displays.

Zonta representatives presented two workshops at the Forum: “Women, Development, and Health: NGO Strategies for International Service”, which focused on the interplay between physical and cultural environments and women’s growth; and “Strategies for the Advancement of Women in Management, Scientific and Professional Fields”, which dealt with the factors helping and hindering the advancement of women in their careers.

Zontians presented “The Zonta Woman” study at this workshop. After a synopsis of its significant points, Zontians divided the group of over 300 hundred women into smaller discussion groups, led by a Zontian who presented questions to the group to stimulate discussions. A report back to the rest of the participants was given by a non-Zontian from each group. In this way, the results of the study were disseminated and additional insight into the success of women throughout the world was gained.

The Zonta Woman, a study

In November 1984, The Zonta International Board had approved conducting a study of "The Zonta Woman". The purpose was to:

1. examine those factors, which have helped, or hindered women employed in executive positions to determine those elements, which contributed to their success
2. review and appraise the gains in equality made by executive women during the decade 1976-85 by comparison with selected portions of the 1978 survey made by Zonta International's European members
3. formulate strategies to illustrate to others those specific attitudes and actions, which have advanced and will advance women to executive status.

Zonta clubs received questionnaires in December 1984; 10,841 Zontians from 47 countries responded; headquarters staff tabulated the answers during April 1985. Dr. Burleigh Gardner of Social Research Inc. analyzed the data and reported as follows.

From the examination of both survey statistics and written comments from respondents I developed an image of the Zonta woman: she is energetic, ambitious and determined to achieve her goals. She recognizes the problems of having a successful career in what still remains a man's world yet is not deterred by the efforts required.

At the same time, she recognizes the rewards of marriage and children and accepts the added burdens they impose.

Although she believes in equality for women, she is not militant in her cause. She believes in earning her equality through excellence in her career.

She received encouragement from her parents, and her husband, too, takes pride in her achievements.

To make a broad generalization, I see Zontians as leaders in a dynamic process of social change, which is sweeping the world. As successful careerists, they are proving that women can meet with men, as equals in what long has been a man's world of technical, business and professional careers.

As mothers, they are passing to the next generation values and attitudes in which competence and ability will replace sex, wealth, or heritage as the promising sources of prestige. Thus, these changes will become embedded in society, passed on from her to future generations.

Looking toward the future.

The idea of a worldwide change effecting the roles and opportunities of women is supported by other data.

For example, Professor Frank Cassell, of Northwestern University in Chicago, has shown me data from the United Nations on World Population, Trends and Policies (Vol.1, 1982). The data shows that throughout the world, in both developed and non-developed countries, there has been a steady shift in the occupations from Agriculture to Industry to Service. The study projects that by the year 2025, service industries (which depend on brainpower, not muscle power) will provide 40.1 per cent of all employment. This will increase the emphasis on education and open many new career opportunities for women.

Many of these Zontians realize that the roles they pass on to their children are a major contribution to the changing status of women. As one states: "Women should make sure that sons and daughters are brought up to think of the opposite sex as equal. The children should be taught to do the same chores around their home and be given the same opportunities".

As part of this change, women must make their own decisions and not just follow the customs of the society or demands of their families. To quote one respondent: “If you really want to do something, get cracking and do it. You will find a way to make it happen”.

Zontians are also aware that as women in successful careers, they should encourage other women to be more determined in following careers. Many feel they have a responsibility to advise and help other women to succeed and encourage them to make their own decisions (*The Zonta Woman*, pp. 30-31).

The Zonta Women Study was a catalyst to future positions as well as a revelation of the executive woman of the 1980s.

1985: Consultative Status Category I *

In 1985, Zonta International was granted Consultative Status Category I with ECOSOC, a position that only 34 out of 491 international organizations held. Zonta did not obtain this position when it first applied in 1983, not because Zonta was not qualified, but because of the entire political picture.

* ECOSOC Status: Under United Nations resolution #1296,

1. Category I consultative status is granted to organizations “which are concerned with most of the activities of the Economic and Social Council and can demonstrate that they have marked and sustained contributions to make the achievements of the objects of the UN known (...) and are closely involved with the economic and social life of the peoples of the areas they represent and whose membership is broadly representative of major segments of population in a large number of countries.”
2. Category II consultative status is granted to organizations “Which have a special competence in, and are specifically with, only a few of the fields of activity covered by the Council, and which are known internationally within the fields for which they seek consultative status.”

Privilege:

- Organizations holding consultative status with ECOSOC in both categories II and I may send authorized observers to meetings of the council and its subsidiary bodies. They may submit “written statements relevant to the work of the Council on subjects which those organizations have a special competence”. Category I status entitles an organization to submit written statements to the Council of 2,000 words, while category II is limited to 500 words. In addition, organizations holding Category I status can propose items to be placed on the provisional agenda of the Council and any of its commissions. Organizations holding either Category I or II status may present oral statements to be heard by the Council. However, organizations holding Category I status may be regularly requested to present statements or opinions before the Council.

1985: UNIFEM

Initially established in December 1976 with the name the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women, the organization was given an expanded mandate by the General Assembly in February 1985, when it became the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Under resolution 39/125, the new fund was called on to support and advocate for innovative activities that give voice and visibility to the women of the developing world. UNIFEM became

an autonomous organization working closely with United Nations Development Program (UNDP) although the resolution also specified that the fund's resources should supplement, not substitute for, the responsibilities of other United Nations development cooperation agencies.

The first Executive Director of UNIFEM, Peg Snyder, and the last Executive Director of UNIFEM, Noeleen Heyzer, are both Honorary Zontians.

1986–1988: Zonta and UNIFEM

In 1986, Zonta International became the first NGO to support UNIFEM by helping to institute the “Women’s Development is World Development” program 1986–92 providing training, education, appropriate technologies, and revolving loan funds for women funding for women in Argentina, Botswana, Comoros Islands, Egypt, Honduras, India, Mexico, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Thailand, Togo and Zimbabwe.

Other projects were in cooperation with UNICEF in Guatemala training young girls in textile production, nutrition, gardening and food conservation; with UNESCO in Uruguay providing equipment for workshops for young mothers’ job training, and with INSTRAW in Nigeria involving women more efficiently in all aspects of water supply and sanitation.

In 1988: Zonta added four UNIFEM service project sites, bringing to ten the number of sustainable, self-help projects for women sponsored by Zonta in cooperation with UNIFEM.

On 15 November 1988, UNIFEM commemorated Zonta as the “leading voluntary organization giving support to UNIFEM and helping to empower women in developing countries to become full partners in the development of their countries and the world”.

1989: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

On 20 November 1989, the UN General Assembly marked the 30th anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child and adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is the first international legal instrument which lays down guarantees for the spectrum of the child’s human rights – rights against slavery, child labor, trafficking and prostitution of minors. As CEDAW is considered the Women’s Bill of Rights, so the Convention on the Rights of the Child is considered the Children’s Bill of Rights.

Zontians everywhere encouraged their governments to ratify the *Convention* on the Rights of the Child. It came into force 2 September 1990. By November 2014, 194 countries had become party to it. The only country which has not ratified the treaty as of 2019, is the United States.

1991-2009: Project Five-Organizations (Project Five-O)

In 1975, at the World Conference of the International Women’s Year in Mexico City, Mexico (see above), the presidents of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women, the International Federation of University Women, The Associated Country Women of the World and Soroptimist International had an initial discussion about a common project designed to help women of Third World Countries in poor economic circumstances, but they did not come to a conclusion.

Five years later, at the second UN World Conference on Women in Copenhagen in 1980, the President of the International Council for Women offered to join these four organizations, and Project Five-O (O standing for Organizations) was born. The initial objective was to establish a training center on each of the five continents with each of the five organizations selecting an appropriate location and establishing a steering committee of the local members to develop detailed proposals. Cooperation among the organizations existed at both the international and local levels.

In 1982, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) agreed to include Project Five-O in its Cooperative Action Program and subsequently provided 15,000 USD to match funds raised from other sources.

In 1990, UNESCO was no longer part of the project, but a UNESCO appointed coordinator administrated the project by receiving the donations from the member organizations and by studying project applications. The approved local projects received financial assistance of up to 15,000 USD in a five-year period. It was understood that after five years, the projects would be able to attract sufficient support from local and other sources.

Zonta International UN Committee chairman Danielle Bridel reported 1991, the following in the Zontian:

In 1990, The Associated Country Women of the World decided to resign from the project, and the four remaining organizations asked Zonta International to join. Zonta International Board of Directors accepted the invitation at its January/February meeting 1991. The cooperation between Non-Governmental Organizations committed to women's issues at all levels is very important, and there is no doubt that the local Zonta clubs will be happy to work on the steering committees of the present and any further projects.

All Zonta clubs in the developing countries which have projects in the field of vocational training for women and would like to request assistance from project Five-O may contact Griselda Kenyon, IFUW in Geneva, Switzerland. As for the clubs in industrialized Countries – without reducing their contributions to the Zonta International Foundation for current service projects – they could consider donations from time to time to Project Five- O.

Activities sponsored by Project Five-O are in India, Thailand, the Philippines, Mexico and Turkey. In Calcutta, India, a training center provides an integrated training program of income-generating activities for women from villages around the city. The center also offers courses in literacy, health, nutrition, hygiene, child care and family planning. In Thailand many small projects exist, including weekend agricultural courses for women. In La Paz, Bolivia, a substantial amount of money was provided to build a schoolhouse to be used for nurses training. In Turkey, a vocational center has been established in which two-year courses are offered in tailoring, machine and hand embroidery, carpet weaving and knitting. Later, courses in computer operation, marketing, cooking, child care and hygiene will be added.

The projects are designed to be self-help in nature and are therefore in perfect conformity with Zonta's objective to promote the status of women (The Zontian, Volume 72, No. 1, August 1991).

Beginning in 1996 and ending when Zonta withdrew from Project 5-O, the heads of the organizations produced joint oral statements for the CSW. The International Presidents saw as a way forward the benefit of expressing their positions jointly. Reading the statement rotated among the organizations.

In 2008-09, a project was implemented for rural women in Latvia in cooperation with Zonta Club of Jelgava and Soroptimist International Club. According to Leslie Wright, Zonta Club of New York, who was the first executive director of Project 5-O, projects approved were to be managed by at least two organizations, who would monitor the work and adjudicate the funds. However, most of the funding was being supplied by Soroptimist. Zonta Clubs were not well-informed about the opportunity, and consequently when Zonta International was asked to produce further financial contributions a decision was taken to withdraw. Part of the reason was that the projects proposed were not in the areas where Zonta had clubs, so in 2007 Zonta International President Olivia Ferry announced Zonta's intent to withdraw, and in 2009, Zonta withdrew after many years of successful collaboration with the other organizations. Soroptimist International and the International Federation of University Women withdrew the same year. (Zonta International UN Committee chairman, Leslie Wright 2018)

1995: Fourth UN Conference on Women

In late August, early September 1995, the UN staged its mammoth Fourth World Conference on the Status of Women in Beijing (the intergovernmental meeting) and the related NGO Forum in Huairou. 189 governments were represented. More than 17,000 participants attended, including 6,000 government delegates at the negotiations, along with more than 4,000 accredited NGOs.

The NGO Forum in Huairou was attended by 30 to 40 thousand participants.

The 1995 conference showed that women had become even more organized globally than in the 1980s, and that the international women's movement had developed a strategic approach to influencing the international agenda. The UN had succeeded in placing the issues of gender equality and participation at the top of the world's agenda. The Conference went a step further than the Nairobi Conference when adopting "The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action", which asserted women's rights as human rights and committed to specific actions to ensure respect for those rights.

The Platform articulated 12 Critical Areas of Concern and described the way forward:

1. Women and Poverty;
2. Education and Training of Women;
3. Women and Health;
4. Violence against Women;
5. Women and Armed Conflict;
6. Women and the Economy;
7. Women in Power and Decision-making;
8. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women;
9. Human Rights of Women;
10. Women and the Media;
11. Women and the Environment;

12. The Girl Child. This was added when women from Africa stated that that was the sustainable future for women's advancement.

(source: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/world-conferences-on-women>; Boutros Boutros-Ghali's introduction to The Beijing Declaration and The Platform for Action, printed in 1996 and published by the Department of Public Information).

Zonta International, which had participated in all the previous three conferences, was determined to play a pivotal role at the Beijing conference. Zonta International President 'Folake Solanke (1994-1996), International Board, headquarters and many Zontians developed an elaborate and comprehensive program of participation, and in addition Zonta International President 'Folake Solanke prepared the "Zonta Open Letter to the Women of the World" parallel to that which Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the late US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, published in 1946.

The Zonta Beijing Program Coordinating Committee had Zonta International President 'Folake Solanke as chairman and the other members were, Ulla Ljungh-Hoff, Sweden, Jane Rhodes, Karen Macier, Billie Johnson and Dunstanette Macauley. Zonta's official participation encompassed a panel discussion entitled: The UN/NGOs: Empowering Women for the 21st Century.

It was divided into five sub-topics namely:

1. The UN/NGOs and the Status of Women: The story so far.
2. Zonta International's Implementation of the 1985 Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies
3. Zonta International and the United Nations. A Future Agenda for the Advancement of Women
4. Violence against Women: A worldwide Health and Development Problem
5. Literacy and the Status of Women.

Zonta International President 'Folake Solanke wrote as follows in *The Zontian*:

The panel discussion attracted an extraordinary crowd. Our guests sat on chairs, on the floor, in the aisle, stood at the sides and at the back of the room. Some people listened through windows, some knocked until allowed into no space. We had to lock the doors and some ladies stood by and physically kept the door locked. The Zonta video (on Zonta's history and activities) was shown at the beginning and the "Zonta Open Letter to the Women of the World" was launched by me at the end. The letter was published in the Conference Forum Newspaper on Tuesday 5th September 1995"

Chief 'Folake Solanke, International President, wrote the following Open Letter to The Women of The World in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, PRC, in August/September 1995:

Dear friends,

In this United Nations Year of Tolerance which happily coincided with the UN's 50TH Golden Anniversary, we extend to you our best wishes for your health, happiness and prosperity.

We reaffirm our commitment to fundamental human rights and social justice for all men, women and children, regardless of race, creed or country of origin.

In view of the increasing role of women in Member Nations of the UN and Affiliated Organizations, we urge you to prevail on your governments to promote the full participation of women in the pursuit of Women's Health, Human Rights and World Harmony.

We ask you to request all Governments to recognize the significance of the Commission on the Status of Women, The United Nations Development Fund for Women – UNIFEM, The United Nations Research and Training Institute for Women – INSTRAW, and the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women – CEDAW, and support their goals and programs, while reaffirming our commitment to financial and other types of accountability throughout the UN system. We call upon you to urge all Governments to ratify and implement recommendations from the International Women's Year (Mexico City 1975), The Mid-Decade Conference on Women in Copenhagen (1980), the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985), and the End-of Decade Conference on Women (Nairobi 1985), and other related conferences and International meetings, duly recognizing the findings of the United Nations World Survey on the Role of Women in the development issues at both macro and micro-levels, and the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women as the central United Nations unit for all matters concerning women.

We urge you to awaken the collective consciousness of the peoples of the world in order to alleviate poverty, generate productive employment and achieve social integration according to the theme of the UN World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen (1995).

Zonta also featured workshops on six topics.

- Human Rights and the Status of Women
- Women's Health and Fecundity Control
- World Harmony: Women and Peace Issues
- A decade of Women's Studies
- Women's Role in Environmental Conservation and Sustainable Development
- Stereotypes of Women on Television/Media

(Folake Solanke: *Reaching for the Stars*, p. 330 ISBN 978-978-8088-50-9).

1996: General Consultative Status

The UN changed its nomenclature and, as Zonta International met the criteria, granted Zonta the highest NGO status offered by ECOSOC. This gave the organization special privileges and responsibilities to the UN. There are over 4,600 NGOs with consultative status but only 143 of them have *General* Consultative Status.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established by resolution of the UN on 21 June 1946 to monitor and promote women's rights and develop global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The CSW mandate was expanded in 1996 to include monitoring and reviewing progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

1996: Zonta–UN Partnership Resolution

At the St. Louis Convention 1996, the convention body approved the Zonta-UN Partnership Resolution.

Zonta attended the inauguration of the UN in San Francisco 1945 and participated in its 50th anniversary celebration 1995. Zonta International has consistently worked with the UN and its Agencies for global service....Zonta International engages in service projects world-wide to alleviate poverty and raise the quality of life. The most vulnerable casualties of poverty are women and children with no access to health care, education, shelter and other basic needs....The UN has scored a measure of success in the advancement of the status of women, health care, environmental consciousness, alleviating poverty, attention to human rights, sensitivity to the plight of indigenous peoples, democracy and peace-keeping; and the UN, for now, is the most effective international forum for global dialogue in this world of horrific multiple conflicts.

Therefore, be it hereby resolved that Zonta International shall

- reaffirm its support for and cooperate with the UN in its programs
- maintain its international voice on principles and public issues through the UN
- examine its current UN committee structure and activities to address current needs, concerns and realities
- call on all governments and the UN to provide the resources to ensure women's health and the health of the girl child
- continue to direct its service projects and to collaborate with other Agencies to empower women with health care, education and shelter in order to alleviate poverty and improve the health of women and girl-children
- continue to work with the UN, its agencies and similar organizations to achieve the stated goals of the World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen 1995)
- call on the UN to urge member states to avoid overconsumption and to share more equitably the world's resources and wealth
- be it finally resolved that Zonta International reaffirms its position that the Non-Governmental Organizations such as Zonta International deserve respect and recognition by the UN and its Agencies.

CSW sessions

In February or March every year, the Commission on the Status of Women meets in New York. Members of the Zonta International UN Committee are active and facilitate workshops and moderate panels.

Zonta International provides a written statement, signs on to statements provided by other organizations when it meets Zonta's goals and priorities, and contributes to the oral debate of the CSW through its prepared oral statements each year. In addition, events parallel to the official meetings are sponsored on issues of significance to the CSW theme. Zonta also partners with missions to provide expert dialogue on the issues being discussed in the official meetings.

Zonta has had outstanding representation on the NGO Committees on the Status of Women over the years, including the presidency in New York through Jackie Shapiro, and the Presidency in Geneva through Simone Ovar. In addition, Ingeborg Geyer serves as treasurer in Geneva, and Mary Ann Tarantula as a board member in New York. Leslie Wright also served as

the chairman in New York but for another organization. These committees formed in 1972 when the International Women's Year was introduced and have run meetings parallel to the CSW ever since. (See list of Zonta International UN chairmen and some representatives below.)

Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development, and Peace for the Twenty-First Century

The General Assembly decided to hold a 23rd special session in New York in June to conduct a five-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and to consider future actions and initiatives. The result was "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development, and Peace for the Twenty-First Century", better known as the Beijing Platform for Action + 5. This was considered the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing Women's rights.

September, 2000: Millennium Summit, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Building upon a decade of major United Nations conferences and summits, world leaders came together in September 2000 at United Nations Headquarters in New York to adopt the United Nations Millennium Declaration committing their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and setting out a series of time-bound targets – with a deadline of 2015 – that have become known as the Millennium Development Goals. MDG number three 3, Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women, was exactly what Zonta International was working to achieve. (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkqd.shtml>)

2000: Security Council Resolution 1325, Women, Peace and Security

On 31 October 2000 the Security Council voted unanimously to adopt a resolution that would provide a framework to increase the participation of women in decision-making and peace processes, to ensure the protection of women and girls, and to institute gender perspectives and training in peacekeeping. This has been a milestone for women's rights, as it gave rise to obligations of member states to move from rhetoric to implementation. Resolutions of the Security Council are, according to the Charter, the only resolutions that all member states are obligated to follow. Annually there are reports and presentations that NGOs and governments provide to the Council on that day, and further resolutions have resulted, calling attention to other important issues related to women, peace and security. Zonta International has a stake in this process.

2005: The 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, New York 2005

A 10-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action was conducted as part of the session. Delegates adopted a declaration emphasizing that the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

Jackie Shapiro, Zonta International UN Committee chairman, worked with the NGO Committee on the Status of Women to ensure NGO participation during this time and spearheaded Zonta's participation in the process. Zonta's event centered on girls.

2008: The Secretary-General's Global Campaign UNiTE to End Violence Against Women

In February 2008, Mr. Ban Ki-moon launched the global campaign UNiTE to End Violence Against Women with the words "violence against women is an issue that cannot wait. Zonta is a launch-partner to UNiTE to End Violence Against Women".

2008: Zonta Statement to ECOSOC

In December 2008, Zonta submitted statements to ECOSOC regarding the equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels of society. Zonta also stressed the contribution of UNIFEM to the achievement of the Commission on Status of Women (CSW) theme of equal sharing of responsibilities by women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS, and legislation for gender equality and empowerment of women in care work.

2009: Say NO-Unite to end Violence against Women

March 5, 2009, UN Secretary-General launched the data-base on violence against women; Zonta was a launch partner.

2010: Zonta Letters to UN

In 2010, Zonta International responded to the news of Iran's appointment to the CSW. Zonta International President wrote letters to Mr. Ban Ki-moon (UN Secretary-General); Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro (Deputy Secretary General and Special Adviser on Gender), Ms. Navanethem Pillay (High Commissioner for Human Rights) and Ambassador Hamidon Ali (President of ECOSOC). The letters lodged Zonta's concerns, asking them to review the eligibility criteria for appointments to CSW.

2010: CSW, New York

The CSW session this year was particularly important, as it marked 15 years since the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action. Member States adopted a declaration that welcomed the progress made towards achieving gender equality, and pledged to undertake further action to ensure the full and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Zonta held a workshop on its partnerships with UNICEF and UNFPA to achieve Millennium Development goal #5 Reduction of Maternal Mortality.

President-elect Dianne Curtis made a presentation at UNIFEM's Say No to Violence against Women workshop, and Zonta International submitted a written statement on the theme to CSW, which was available to all participants and delegates.

2010: Partnering at the Global Level to Promote the Rights of Women and Girls

(*The Zontian* 2008-2010 Biennium, Issue Three, February 2010, p 19-23)

The chairman of Zonta International UN Committee, Jackie Shapiro, wrote a five-page article in this edition of *The Zontian*, explaining how the Zonta International UN Committee worked with the UN entities and the NGOs.

Zonta International is affiliated with the UN as an NGO in different ways. As an accredited NGO with a strong interest in the work of the UN, Zonta obtains information through the Department of Public Information (DPI) and reports back to Zontians all over the world to enhance their understanding and build support for the UN's work. Zonta International is also affiliated with the UN through consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), a special arrangement for organizations whose work is deemed by Member States to contribute to the achievement of UN

objectives. There are several categories of NGO ECOSOC affiliation, and Zonta International has the most extensive – General Consultative Status (former category I). Some 1,500 non-governmental organizations are affiliated through DPI and more the 3,000 are affiliated through ECOSOC, though many, like Zonta International have both Affiliations....Zonta International is a member of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UNs (CONGO). Founded in 1948, CONGO's mandate is to increase opportunities for NGOs to participate in debates and decision-making processes at the UN. One way that CONGO is most effective is through the organization of standing committees that inform and engage NGOs in ensuring that their particular issues of concern – be it the status of women...– are prominent on the agenda for action by Member States and UN bodies. There are 12 CONGO standing committees in Geneva, 23 in New York and 8 in Vienna.

2010: UN Women

On 2 July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously voted to create a single UN body to accelerate progress in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. The new UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) merged four agencies and offices: the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues (OSAGI), and the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) (www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2010/7/un-creates-new-structure-for-empowerment-of-women)

Participants in the Torino Convention 2012 listened to a very interesting lecture by Mrs. Michelle Bachelet, Chile, the first Executive Director of UN women.

When UNIFEM merged into UN Women, the Zonta International Foundation grants continued, and the relationship in 2017 is that Zonta International is the largest contributor to UN Women of any non-governmental organization, providing more funding for UN Women and the Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women than some governments. Zonta has contributed to the development agenda, and to research on women at the UN, and continues with its cooperation through participation in the Women's Empowerment Program – a joint venture between UN Women and the UN Global Compact to improve women's employment opportunities and advancement (Zonta International UN Committee chairman, Leslie Wright).

2012–2020: Zonta Says NO,

As a launch partner to the Say NO-Unite to end Violence against Women campaign, Zonta has brought attention to the efforts to end violence against women around the globe and in the local communities.

In November 2012, the Zonta International Board agreed to launch "Zonta Says NO", an internal and external campaign with the purpose of drawing attention to Zonta's activities to fight violence against women. Besides getting Zonta's message out and increasing Zonta's visibility, the campaign also had an important impact internally. Every Zonta club and each Zontian could be involved; it had the power to unite the Zonta world.

The campaign was to end in January 2014 but conventions in Orlando 2014 and Nice 2016 decided to extend and develop the “Zonta says No to Violence against Women” campaign and new tools were presented to the clubs continuously. In the 2018-20 biennium, the Zonta says NO initiative was further enhanced as part of Goal 1: “the initiative is further developed to achieve local and governmental commitment” (The Zontian 2018-20, Issue One, July 2018 p. 29).

2014: New York, Malmö and Geneva

A large Zonta group participated in the 58th session of CSW in March 2014.

Many preparatory meetings for the CSW 2015 were held during 2014. In the Nordic Countries the event called Nordic Forum was held in Malmö in June 2014.

Prior to the UN World Conference on Women in 1995 and again in 2004, the Council of Nordic Ministers and women’s organizations arranged meetings, lectures, workshops and exhibitions on the status of women. Each of them called Nordic Forum. The first Nordic Forum was in Oslo, the second Nordic Forum in Turku. Nordic Zonta clubs participated. When the decision was taken to arrange a Nordic Forum in Malmö in June 2014 to prepare NGOs for the CSW meetings in New York in March 2015 and to revitalize the debate on status of women, the three Nordic Zonta districts D13, D20 and D21 felt an obligation to be there. The three districts agreed on appointing members to a committee and on sharing the expenses. Zonta arranged an information booth and hosted an event, which gave Zonta International President-Elect Maria José Landeira Oestergaard an opportunity to make a speech focusing on the root causes of violence against women and the campaign *Zonta says No to Violence against Women*. A Swedish theatre group of two women, experts in inter-active theatre, made the audience participate in the debate. The response of the audience was positive.

More than a hundred Zontians participated in the NGO meeting in Geneva 3-5 November 2014, co-organized by Simone Overt, Zonta Club of Pinerolo, Italy, member of the Zonta International UN Committee and Zonta’s representative in Geneva.

Astrid Grude Eikseth, Zonta Club of Trondheim, D13 UN Committee chairman reported in the D13 Newsletter:

Two Zontians from District 13, Governor Eva Nielsen and myself, attended the marvelous NGO Forum on Beijing+20. This was an UN ECE Review related to the processes from The Beijing Platform for Actions in 1995 to the future. In March 2015, this will be addressed in the UN meeting on women in New York.

700 participants from 350 different groups and institutions in 56 countries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE) were gathered, and among them 100 Zontians! It also happened to be a Zontian, Simone Overt, who was the Co-chairman. I felt that I was a witness to a historic happening in the majestic buildings of UN Geneva among hundreds of powerful women who fought for the women’s human rights.

The first day was packed with opening ceremony and reviews, more than 15 speeches in 3 ½ hours without breaks

2015: New York CSW 59

In mid-2013, the UN Economic and Social Council requested the Commission on the Status of Women to review and appraise implementation of the Platform for Action in 2015, in a session called Beijing +20.

ECOSOC also called on UN Member States to perform comprehensive national reviews and encouraged regional commissions to undertake regional reviews.

According to the Zonta International goals, Zonta International prepared to play a major role at the CSW 59 session in New York in March 2015.

13 December 2014 Zonta International forwarded its statement to CSW:

Founded in 1919, Zonta International works to advance the status of women worldwide through service and advocacy. Zonta has had an active role at all four of the women's conferences, beginning with its Past International President Helvi Sipilä, who served as the Secretary General for the First World Conference held in Mexico City in 1975. Sipilä went on to spearhead the establishment of UNIFEM and INSTRAW, now part of UN Women, and was a driving force behind Zonta's work with the United Nations. Since 1923, Zonta has funded projects in 36 countries, empowering women and contributing to a life free of violence for women with more than USD 19 million. Most of this funding has been through United Nations agencies. In addition, Zonta's representation in 67 countries has guaranteed millions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of volunteer- hours to implementing the commitments made in Mexico City, Copenhagen, Nairobi and also in Beijing. Today, Zonta continues to be on the front lines for women's rights through local and global projects that promote self-sufficiency, equal rights, access to education and health, and the prevention of violence against women.

As evaluation of the 12 Critical Areas of Concern in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is being undertaken, Zonta International calls on parents, educators, administrators, law and policy makers and delegates to the 59th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women to address PREVENTION OF ROOT CAUSES THROUGH EDUCATION and to facilitate effective mechanisms that will ensure

1. EQUALITY by

- a. Increasing the level of non-discriminatory education Laws and policies shall enable equal access to education for girls and boys and shall ensure that girls can continue their education regardless of marital or parental status. Such education requires the adoption of a human rights-based approach through and in education, ensuring the learning of human rights, that the human rights of all members of the school community are respected and human rights are practiced within the education system.
- b. Guaranteeing women access to all resources and representation in decision-making positions on the same basis as men.
- c. Alignment between the Millennium Development Goals and the Post-2015 Agenda, and intergovernmental resolutions is needed to guarantee women access to all resources and to ensure greater representation and participation of women in national and local decision-making bodies and other areas of civic engagement.

2. ERADICATION of VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN by
 - a. Supporting PREVENTIVE programs promoting gender-equal norms and violence-free environments, and programs that help men to change behavior towards women to one of mutual respect.
 - b. PROTECTION of women by providing One Stop Centers with medical/legal/social help for victims. Furthermore, promoting short term shelters and long term affordable housing for women and children, and supporting vocational training for victims to become self-supporting.
 - c. PROSECUTION of the perpetrators through a) laws that clearly blame perpetrators, not victims; b) reporting systems and support to victims during legal processes; c) training of police and legal professionals to understand the issues.

Equal rights and a life free of violence is NOT a women's issue. It is a societal issue that has to be solved by women and men working together to reach common goals. As a non-governmental organization, Zonta International encourages the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly to adopt a strong, sustainable Post-2015 development framework, and calls upon governments to shape the International Development Cooperation for its effective implementation.

2015: UN Special Summit on Sustainable Development

In September 2015 in New York the UN adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; 17 Sustainable Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, to be completed by 2030. It was adopted unanimously. Women have a critical role to play in all the SDGs, with many targets specifically recognizing women's equality and empowerment as both the objective and as part of the solution.

Goal 5, to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" is known as the stand-alone gender goal.

Deep legal and legislative changes are needed to ensure women's rights around the world. While 143 countries guaranteed equality between men and women in their Constitutions by 2014, another 52 had not taken this step. Stark gender disparities remain in economic and political realms. While there has been some progress over the decades, on average women in the labor market still earn 24 per cent less than men globally. As of August 2015, only 22 per cent of all national parliamentarians were female, a slow rise from 11.3 per cent in 1995. (www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/women)

2016: CSW 60

The theme for CSW 60 in New York in March was "Women's Empowerment and its link to Sustainable Development". Again, Zonta submitted a written statement and sponsored with the US Fund for UNICEF a parallel event titled "Empowering women and girls: Ownership Over their Lives, Health and Children's Well-being." In addition, Zonta International President Maria Jose Landeira Oestergaard spoke at a number of partner session both inside the UN and at parallel events.

2017: CSW 61

The theme of CSW session 61 in New York in March was @Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work@.

Zonta International partnered with the government of Zambia to offer a side event at the UN to discuss the impact of work and access to income to domestic violence survivors. The session included the First Lady of Zambia, with International President Sonja Hönig Schough and Committee member Simone Ovar, as well as representatives from the ILO and UN Women presenting. The panel was moderated by UN Committee chairman Leslie Wright.

2017: April, Zonta International Supports UNFPA

Zonta International is dismayed to learn of the United States’ decision to withdraw funding for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), a decision that will ultimately have devastating consequences for women and girls worldwide. For more than 10 years, Zonta International has proudly partnered with UNFPA to deliver critical life-changing and life-saving programs for the most vulnerable women and girls, improving health, eradicating violence against women and ending all forms of harmful practices (...)

2017: July, New York, High Level Political Forum (HLPF):

For months Leslie Wright, Zonta International UN Committee chairman, had been working with the NGO Major Group to participate fully at the HLPF. This meeting is convened annually by ECOSOC and every four years by the General Assembly. It replaced the Commission on Sustainable Development and was established as a mechanism for reviewing progress on the SDGs. Zonta International maintained a key position in this mechanism through participation on two Major Groups – the organs set up to streamline NGO participation. As Goal 5, the stand-alone women’s goal, was being reviewed, Zonta applied for and received a position for a side event. The subject was Child, Early and Forced Marriage, which was part of the consideration for Goal 5. The report of this meeting then became the basis for Zonta’s statement to the CSW. (source: information from Zonta International UN Committee chairman Leslie Wright)

2018: World Day of Justice 20 February

The United Nations’ theme for 2018 is “Workers on the Move: The Quest for Social Justice.” Zonta International president addresses the issue in an open letter.

2018: March, New York – CSW 62

The theme of the 2018 CSW was challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls.

December 2017, prior to the 62nd session, Zonta International forwarded a statement to UN. Zonta International, calling on the United Nations and its Member States “to find effective short term and long- term methods to eliminate child, early and forced marriage and empower all women and girls and ensure that the unique needs of the most vulnerable rural women and girls are addressed”.

Strategies to address child, early and force marriage should include:

- Strengthen and enforce the implementation of national laws that set 18 as the minimum age of marriage
- Mobilize communities to abandon harmful traditional practices

- Empower young girls to understand their rights and provide them with access to peer support networks and education and training to prevent early and forced marriage
- Ensure equal access to quality education at all levels and address the unique needs of young married girls to allow them to return to school and complete their education.

The statement is supported by 17 associations/organization.

2018: 26 September, New York

26 September 2018, in support of ending child marriage, Zonta International President Susanne von Bassewitz made a statement at a high-level side-event on eliminating child marriage in Africa at the United Nations General Assembly. The event, organized by the permanent missions of Canada and Zambia to the United Nations, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women, engaged African Heads of State and Governments in a dialogue on child, early and forced marriage with the goal of renewing commitments to implement national strategies to end child, early and forced marriage.

Susanne addressed Zonta International's latest work in ending child marriage through a new collaborative project with UNICEF and UNFPA, which builds upon Zonta's efforts to end violence against women through its Zonta Says NO to Violence Against Women global campaign.

The decision to focus on Ending Child Marriage comes from Zonta's experience with UNFPA's Ending Child Marriage project in Niger and the fact that UNICEF and UNFPA had joined forces with a long-term commitment to address the issue globally. In the next two years, Zonta will allocate an additional 2 million US Dollars to ending child marriage – the largest annual contribution Zonta has made to a project to date.

By joining this global partnership, Zonta aims to contribute a lot more than funding: to raise the voice of opinion-leaders in order to secure the human rights of millions of vulnerable girls throughout the world.

United Nations observances

Key among the many annual United Nations days and campaigns observed by Zonta International are:

- World Day of Social Justice (20 February)
- International Women's Day (8 March), since 1996-98 designated Zonta Rose Day)
- International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November)
- 16 Days of Activism to end Gender-based Violence (25 November through 10 December). The Zonta Say NO to Violence campaign runs in this period
- Human Rights Day (10 December).

Zonta International UN Committee

The UN Committee is different from other committees because its members continue to serve for consecutive biennia. They represent Zonta International at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Paris, and more recently in Bangkok. For example, Geneva: Dr. Gertie Deneke, Zonta Club of Basel, served from the early 1950s until September 1974.

Committee Chairmen

1972–74	
1974–76	Harriette Yeckel, Zonta Club of Kansas City
1976–78	
1978–80	Eleanor Jammal, Zonta Club of Ashtabula, Ohio
1980–82	Danielle Bridel, Zonta Club of Bern, Switzerland
1982–84	M. Helen McLaughlin, Zonta Club of New Brunswick, New Jersey, Co-chairman Ursula Scheid, Zonta Club of Berlin II
1984–86	Ursula Scheid, Zonta Club of Berlin II
1986–88	
1988–90	
1990–92	Danielle Bridel, Zonta Club of Bern, Switzerland, Co-chairman Margaret Snyder, Zonta Club of New York
1992–96	Auguste Mayer, Zonta Club of Vienna, Regional Vice-chairman Magda Bossy, France
1996–98	Doris Vaughan, Zonta Club of New York
1998–2010	Jacqueline Shapiro, Zonta Club of New York
2010–2014	Mary Ann Tarantula
2014–2018	Leslie Erway Wright, Zonta Club of New York
2018–2020	Ingeborg Geyer, Zonta Club of Vienna, Austria

Sources:

Issues of *The Zontian*

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