

# Commission on the Status of Women adopts theme of ‘Leaving no one behind us’

29 March 2016

**The annual United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is taking a new turn in its 60th Session in March by relating its goals to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).**



The goals, officially known as “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” are an intergovernmental set of goals with 169 targets.

UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka spoke out for a new starting point, explaining that “Leaving no one behind us” is the secular slogan for the Christian Gospel text “What you have done for the least among you, you have done for me”.

Mlambo-Ngcuka comes from a Christian background and shared the hope that the CSW will define a future road to accompany the SDGs. She announced that an evaluation will take place in 2020. “Implement, implement”, she urged, noting that implementation is the priority in the following years, adding that the Beijing Platform for Action provides a holistic framework and can guide us, together with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to achieve the SDG goals. All countries in the world should be concerned and will experience an extreme challenge in fulfilling the SDGs, she added, which are universally valid.

The Church Center for the United Nations and The Salvation Army offered their space for many parallel events. An event entitled “Female Theological Resources for engaging Gender-based Violence” was prepared by Dr Fulata L. Moyo,

programme executive for the Just Community of Women and Men at the World Council of Churches and Prof. Sarojini Nadar from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

They chose a text from the book of Esther to serve as a common reading. Nadar asked the public, women and a few men, to imagine they were one of the figures in the text and to reflect about their feelings. Such a direct interpretation of the text with women (and men) from diverse cultural backgrounds showed a wide interpretation about a woman's introduction into patriarchal patterns and society.

Participants pondered the question: What could really have happened with the girls, especially at night, when Esther first met with the King? A rich interpretation, reflexion and new insights followed. Participants reported that the event was a successful way to show the diversity of perspectives and bridge cultural and religious contexts.

Another parallel event — "Religion and Feminism: Is Religion an Obstacle or Opportunity for Women's Empowerment?" — was held at The Salvation Army and was offered by the World Faiths Development Dialogue, co-sponsored by the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs. Dr Moyo contributed in this panel discussion about stereotypes that divide religious and feminist actors. She pointed out that, although equality is important, it is merely a stepping stone toward justice. For Moyo, equality denotes sameness, whereas justice recognizes difference without discrimination on that basis.

Feminism, she added, is the radical notion that women are people and, for her, an equal presence does not guarantee quality of participation, thus the World Council of Churches is moving toward having equal just presence and participation of women and men at its decision-making bodies.