

United Nations Day 2010 Highlights by Melissa Guardaro, NYS International Chair

On October 8th, thirty members from nine different branches of the New York State AAUW participated in United Nations Day. This group listened to presentations from representatives from the United Nations and CARE. This program was developed in conjunction with the statewide *My Sister's Keeper* project.

Antoine de Jong, an Advisor for the Outreach and Business Development Team (OBDT) from UNIFEM, discussed the changes in the structure of the United Nations that will better utilize the efforts and resources of those that are working on women's issues. There will now be gender responsive budgeting and a consolidation of efforts. Five different women's organizations will be combined to work together under the Undersecretary General. The new organization, UNWomen, will have its own executive board comprised of forty one member states, whose participation is determined not only by status within the United Nations but also by the level of contribution towards women's issues. The four areas focused on in the goal to achieve gender justice are

- 1) Expanding women-friendly public services including women and girls' right to education, health and food.
- 2) Guaranteeing land and jobs for women; ensuring the right to a decent livelihood, through access to economic assets
- 3) Increasing women's voice in decision-making; full participation of women in society, starting from autonomy in the household, to voice in all political processes at community, national and international levels
- 4) Ending violence against women and girls

Donald Lee, an economist from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) from the United Nations, presented next and stated that if poverty is alleviated, all of the Millennium Development Goals could be accomplished. A stunning map of the populations of the world where a large percentage of the populations are living on less than \$2 a day was presented and most of those countries are in Africa and South Asia. In 2000, the 192 Member States (all of the countries) of the United Nations agreed to achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals by 2015. All of these goals are about women. Mr. Lee expanded on each goal and the progress made. Briefly the eight goals are

- 1) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- 2) Achieve universal primary education
- 3) Promote gender equality and empower women
- 4) Reduce child mortality
- 5) Improve maternal health
- 6) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- 7) Ensure environmental stability
- 8) Develop a global partnership for development.

Debra Cooper, Senior Field Coordinator, Northeast Region Policy and Advocacy Unit for CARE, detailed CARE's efforts to improve the lives of women worldwide and spoke about advocacy efforts within New York State. It is important that we let our elected officials know that we are concerned about the plight of women. For example, since our meeting, the Senate has moved S.987 - International Protecting Girls by Preventing Child Marriage Act of 2009 out of the Foreign Relations Committee to the legislative calendar. This bill protects girls in developing countries by preventing child marriage, which then leads to a host of other problems. (Please call your Senators to support this bill!)

This program was made possible through the efforts of many people. Special thanks are in order to the AAUW Manhattan branch that assisted in hosting this event and to Carolyn Donovan, AAUW United Nations Representative, for helping to organize an insightful program.