

A Geneva-based NGO (TRIAL) spoke on behalf of Bosnia-Herzegovina (BH). Countries also being considered this session were Afghanistan, Cuba, Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of Congo and Dominican Republic.

Like all UN session the meeting was from 10-13.00. Given that there was only one other country NGO, we were hopeful that we might have more time with the Committee. However, we did not bargain on the UN agencies having first audience with the Committee in "private" sessions (ie UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA etc). So we waited and waited and waited. We eventually got in at 12.15 and so once everyone had spoken we had about 10 minutes for questions which included BH.

Further UK questions from the Committee regarding single sex provision and migrant women's needs as well as a development question were posed. There was nothing on older women even though I had given them all a copy of the executive summary of the report before the meeting started and spoken to them about their work on GR27.

The Chair of the meeting, Nicola Ameline, a former minister in the Sarkozy government was impressed by our consistent message about the austerity measures and the impact on women's services and women's lives. She stressed the need to ensure that the Committee consider the global financial situation and the impact of country responses on women's lives as a theme underpinning their future work- seeing the UK NGOs as giving a lead in this area.

After the meeting she was keen to talk to us and began to think about a joint UK/French "round table" on these issues. Any ideas we might have would be well received. However, some of us were unsure about the slant given her political allegiances. On the other hand there may be some mileage given the work of the women's budget group and in Coventry and the North East. Charlotte took her card and will circulate the contact details.

At lunch in the cafeteria we were joined by Bradford Smith, head of the CEDAW section. He thought Ms Ameline may well be elected as the new Chair of the Committee and that the representative from Bangladesh (Ms Jahan, who is also the Bangladeshi Ambassador to Brussels) may well be our rapporteur. I also picked up that the Committee were not unanimous in developing the GR27, with some sections having to be voted on. There were some on the Committee who saw age discrimination as between younger and older rather than between older women and older men. This is perhaps something that we should look at more carefully. We did raise the fact that our issues, papers and the Older Women's shadow report are still not posted on the website.

While waiting to get in to the UN in the early morning, I spoke to the Czech delegation who were up for their periodic review. The only woman in the delegation was their head of human rights and I spoke to her about whether they would address older women's issues in their next CEDAW report!

Clearly the fact that we were there in force and were consistent in our message did make an impact- not just on the Committee but also on the secretariat. Charlotte did an excellent job in preparing us all and a great coup to be on the Women's Hour at the same time. I can see the impact of modern communication with Twitter and blogs etc and it gave us energy during the wait to know that the issues were being raised back home too. Geneva was warm and sunny and we even managed a drink at the bar of the Beau Rivage!