Looking back over the 2019 NAWO was able to contribute on many fronts to the progress of gender equality. The NAWO Youth Alliance was very active, contributing to CSW63 in New York, to the CEDAW review of the UK in Geneva, and most recently to the ECE review of the Beijing Platform for Action also in Geneva. As members of the NAWO Youth Alliance young people have many opportunities to contribute to national and international discussions on gender equality, presenting a perspective for the future.

The UK gave a review on Agenda 2030 in the UK at the HLPF in New York in July 2019.  NAWO and the CSW CSO Alliance worked with GEO to have the civil society consultation on Goal 5 and Goal 10 and we also worked with UKSSD to try to get gender perspectives into the civil society consultations on Goal 16.  We are seeking to have follow up meetings to try, with UKSSD, to get the action plan that we are looking for. If you would like to be more involved, please do let us know.  We need to ensure that the voice of women and girls is heard and heeded in the implementation of the SDGs across the UK.

In September NAWO held a very successful strategy event at the House of Commons to review issues of gender equality prior to CSW64 and the ECE Region meeting review of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in preparation for 2020. The intention was to develop a document which identified key issues facing women and girls in the UK, ensuring a four nations approach and identifying key asks. Many thanks to Roberta Blackman Wood for sponsoring the event and to the Members of Parliament and House of Lords who managed to spare some time in spite of critical votes on Brexit being held at the same time! The document, a parallel report for CSW64, has been completed thanks to the contributions from many NAWO members.

Jackie Jones, Co-Chair of NAWO, was elected as a European Member of Parliament and has been very active supporting the gender equality agenda since taking up her position. As a consequence of her success however she has had to take a step back from NAWO and resigned her position as Co – Chair. Pat Black took over on a temporary basis until our next AGM.

NAWO continues to provide the Secretariat for the UK CSW Alliance, with a significant name change from NGO to CSO in the title. This is to recognise that many organisations working to achieve gender equality, particularly smaller ones, do not have NGO status or may not be recognised through the UN ECOSOC process. NAWO and the Alliance provides opportunities to engage in discussions with the UK Government through GEO and contribute to the agenda. Any Civil Society Organisation supporting women and girls and working toward gender quality can be part of the Alliance and of course would be welcome as members of NAWO.

NAWO had a strong presence at the ECE UN Region meeting in October, with several members also representing other member organisations. We were able to hold a meeting with UK GEO to review the discussions and present suggestions for follow up to improve the outcome document. Young people were strongly represented at this meeting and given leadership roles including summarising the Civil Society discussions presented to the ECE meeting.

NAWO is has coordinated the preparation and production of a parallel report for the review of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to underpin lobbying from the UK CSO CSW Alliance to the next UK Government as well as discussions in New York in March 2020.

There is a lot going on at the moment and I would like to thank all our members who are contributing to keep gender equality across the UK on the agenda. This has been especially important over the last few months with discussions on Brexit and a UK General Election. NAWO will continue to keep an eye on policy developments over 2020 as changes are made. We must be ready to ensure that women’s rights are not pushed back.

Please join us in making sure that doesn’t happen. We are so much stronger when we work together.

Pat Black

Chair, NAWO