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National Alliance of Women's Organisations
Minutes of the 21st Annual Meeting held on 25th June 2015

At

Committee Room 8, House of Commons, Westminster, London

1. Welcome and Apologies

NAWO Chair Annette Lawson (ARL) welcomed members and expressed gratitude to Gavin Shuker MP for sponsoring the event. ARL re-iterated that fully-paid up members can vote, but that non-members are very welcome as observers to the meeting.

There were 30 member organisations and individual members in attendance.

Sarah Priest - Project Manager and Coordinator, and Rosie Fox - Project Officer, were also present.

Members' Apologies (written in) were received from:

Pat Holden	NAWO Trustee
Tahirih Danesh	NAWO Trustee
Baroness Fiona Hodgson	House of Lords
Linda Poole	BPW UK
Miriam David	
Pearl Clarke	NBCW
Carwen Wynne-Davies	Soroptimists/WENWales
Lesley Abdela	Shevolution

2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 19 May 2014

The Minutes of the last AGM, held on 19 May 2014, were circulated and included in the NAWO AGM pack.

ARL called for any corrections to the Minutes.

There were none forthcoming and they were unanimously accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising: NAWO member Jane Tatchell, representing BPW, asked whether the action in the Minutes to map numbers in the UK CSW Alliance had been completed. Vice Chair Zarin Hainsworth replied that a google survey has been created to establish exact numbers. There has not been a full response from all CSW Alliance members, and different methods are being explored.

3. Report and Accounts from the period 1st January 2014 to 31st December 2014

ARL passed the Chair to Zarin Hainsworth (ZH), who invited ARL and NAWO Treasurer Lynda Dearlove (LD) to present the Trustees' Report and Accounts for the period.

ARL summarised the narrative of the Trustees' report. Highlights include a Strategic Away Day in February 2014 which led to NAWO's five-year Strategic Plan setting out key priorities and how they would be implemented. ARL emphasised that NAWO acts as an alliance – different from an association - and that affects how we move forward as an organisation. Members and other organisations are our allies; a key foundation of the Strategic Plan is undertaking activities in order to advance women's status, which NAWO cannot do alone.

NAWO is also itself a member of many fruitful networks. This work is undertaken in a climate of austerity which unfairly impacts women and our organisations, despite mechanisms created like the UK NGO CSW Alliance, the End Violence Against Women coalition (EVAW) and the Gender and Development Network (GADN). ARL noted that these networks are recognised by government, but at a time when human rights are under legislative threat, we need to be constantly on alert about how we proceed, and recognise the increased abuse of women.

ARL therefore stressed that as well as building alliances, NAWO is working to create new institutional mechanisms for women's voices to be both heard and heeded by government/s. Annette Lawson, Janet Veitch and Megan Brady-Clark, on behalf of the CSW Alliance and with evidence provided by a number of its members, produced the only NGO report of which we are aware, in response to the UK government answers to the UNECE Questionnaire on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly held July 2000: *UK Women: Rights and Progress*.

ARL reported that NAWO seeks to bring the national to the international and vice versa; building alliances within and beyond our membership. NAWO also endeavours to bring a Four Nations approach to all our work. NAWO seeks to establish effective strategies for influence; focusing on members' priorities and those of the European Women's Lobby where those priorities align with our own, for instance, the abolitionist stance on prostitution and the need at least for parity in decision-making.

NAWO has been developing its Young Women's Alliance (YWA); this has grown to 207 members and operates through a blog, on twitter and through regular and engaging mail-outs. Through this work, we encourage young women to develop feminist attitudes and have a voice to push forward feminist goals.

A core part of NAWO's work also concerns older women's contributions; recognising that young women are important, but so are women of all ages and older women can make a significant contribution – 'we are all part of the future until the day we die'.

ARL commented that members will see in the report how important projects have become and noted that NAWO's engagement with the shadow reporting process and attendance at CEDAW in July 2013 was important in NAWO winning the contract with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to produce a document detailing recommendations/observations made by the CEDAW Committee to the UK. It was noted Jackie Jones had helped particularly in this work together with other partners in Wales and Scotland.

NAWO also played an important part in the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in June 2014, holding two events. The first, chaired by Minister for Women Nicky Morgan, pointed to the fact that this summit was focused on rape and violence against women as 'over there' in conflict, but violence against women required also a UK focus. Hence this event emphasised that the whole issue was fundamentally about gender inequality. Policy to prevent and deal with gender-based violence had to be directed to the underlying cause wherever it was experienced. The second was a young people's event held jointly with NAWO member organisation Progressio.

Lynda Dearlove, Hon. Treasurer, was then invited to present the accounts, reporting that this is a 'black and white' budget and NAWO is not in the red. LD pointed to a difference in the last 3 years to previously, with a movement towards project funding. For instance, the *A Safety Compass* project represents money with which to partner with a member organisation (women@thewell); this is a change in understanding of funding for NAWO. As a result, NAWO has successfully attracted other EU funding, by showing that we have a track record and credibility in that arena.

LD explained some noticeable differences in the 2014 account compared to 2012-13; for instance, it appears that there were more subscriptions in 2012-13. However, this figure represents an 18 month period because NAWO changed its end of year from July to December, whereas the 2014 figure is for 12 months only and indeed, membership is up this year.

LD pointed to a minus figure at the bottom of page 13; this is money that came in the previous financial year as a lump sum for the *A Safety Compass* project, in which only 8% of the total grant is held over to the end of the project. This is therefore not a negative number, rather it indicates how the grant has been spread over 3 years. LD noted that it is currently a challenging funding climate for organisations which do not deliver direct services; NAWO has therefore had to learn to be creative, learning to – for instance - work in partnership on projects with members. LD called on member organisations to consider this model and discuss it with NAWO so that we can enable each other to go forward together.

4. Motions

- a. *ZH called for the Trustees' Report and Accounts to be accepted as a true record of the period 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2014. Ann Dawson (The Haven, Wolverhampton) proposed the motion and Janet Harris (Individual Member) seconded. The motion passed.*

- b. *ZH called for Brian Seaton be re-appointed as the Independent examiner of the Trustees' Report and Accounts for the year 2015. Wendi Momen (individual Member) proposed the motion and Kathryn Hodges (Women@theWell) seconded. The motion passed.*

5. Guest Speaker: Joanna Maycock, Secretary-General of the European Women's Lobby (EWL)

ARL welcomed Joanna Maycock (JM), noting that NAWO has a special relationship with EWL as one of the four women's organisations from the UK (Wen Wales, NIWEP, Engender and NAWO) comprising the UK Joint Committee on Women (UKJCW), which represents the UK to EWL. Two delegates from each of these organisations sit on the UKJCW, forming a committee of eight. There is a rotational system, in which one of the four organisations' members represents the whole of the UK on the EWL Board. Some of those members have, in the past, been elected to serve on EWL's Executive Committee; for instance Liz Law from NIWEP was EWL Treasurer until 2014. The UKJCW takes up EWL issues in the UK, and at the EWL table is a voice for the UK.

JM told NAWO members that it was a pleasure to speak to them, explaining that NAWO has played an important role in the conception and life of EWL, which is currently celebrating 25 years of feminist activism across Europe. JM has been Secretary-General for the last year, and said she would be discussing where Europe currently stands in terms of women's rights, EWL's assessment of this record and EWL's new strategic framework.

JM previously worked for ActionAid International on women's rights across the world; indeed, Europe looks like a paradise from some parts of the world. JM was keen to take her EWL role in order to get back in touch with what is happening in terms of feminist activism and because she perceived a new feminist energy. She noted that she has come up against shocking facts about gender inequality in Europe every day in this job, and whilst there is much to be positive about in terms of progress, there is a prevailing state of stagnation. The Gender Equality Index launch was taking place in Brussels today, the third time this index has been produced by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). The Index reports total stagnation; 8 countries are going backwards, and the UK is one of them - for the second time. There is particular stagnation around power and time: women and men in positions of power and authority across the board, and in terms of women's insufficient time to work full-time, for example. There has been some progress on pay and work: the pay gap has reduced, but this is because men's pay has decreased.

JM pointed to the economy, power, stereotypes and violence as explanations for this stagnation, and called for the need to work together across Europe in coalitions. EWL has 51 members in 28 member states, plus some candidate countries, along with international and pan-European alliance members. EWL estimates that their membership comprises around 2,500 women's organisations across Europe.

The stagnation in progress on gender equality is compounded by a parallel political inertia; that is, austerity measures and conflicting political visions of Europe. EWL is grappling with this changing context; if we are to advance women's rights, we must determine how we can strengthen our voice, and our financial position (EWL itself and women's organisations across Europe):

EWL has been working on a new strategic framework, *Together for a Feminist Europe*, over the past 8 months which has recently been approved. It sets out a transformative vision for Europe, takes EWL forward and builds on the previous work of EWL and its members. At its core is influencing the EU's legislative and programmatic agenda; strengthening the women's movement and members'

ability to work together, and enabling members to set priorities and campaigns, as seen with the *Brussels Call: together for a Europe free from prostitution*. EWL is working to build a new campaign on the pension gap.

JM referred to the need for resource-pooling in order to have maximum impact, including in terms of skills building, campaigning, fundraising, and organisational development. Women's organisations across Europe can do amazing things with very few resources and we must make that case more strongly.

JM noted that the institutional inertia at EU level is worrying given that equality between women and men is the EU's second article, and is recognised as a human rights and fairness issue. Despite this fact and despite the lack of progress, the European Commission has not committed to having a new Strategy for equality between women and men; however, joint European strategic action makes a difference. Moreover, the European Commission's position is in contradiction to the wishes of member states – 21 of whom wrote and asked for the development of a Strategy although the UK was not one of them - and that of the European Parliament.

ARL invited questions for JM from members. In response to JM's comment that Europe is seen to be a paradise in comparison to some other regions, Khatija Barday-Wood (EIMAN) asked which are the worst and best countries in Europe? JM responded that whilst the UK is going backwards, it is not the worst. Estonia figures badly (with a huge pay gap and poor political representation of women). She noted that in some Central European countries there is high poverty and the impact of austerity has been severe. Sweden still features at the top of league tables, with Nordic countries in general performing the best according to several factors.

Lizette Robleto de Howarth asked about efforts with regard to an EU Strategy; JM responded that EWL believes that one is definitely needed and that it is the only way to hold EU institutions to account, and that it is important in the context of the EU engaging in conversations with the rest of the world about the post-2015 agenda that will also apply in Europe.

NAWO member Elizabeth Sclater asked whether the European Commission's lack of interest in a Strategy is in order to save money, or a politically-motivated move from President Juncker and senior political officers? JM replied that it is part of a larger gamble by Juncker and others, whose vision for Europe is less legislation in direct response to Eurosceptics; representing a capitulation to euroscepticism rather than seeking to challenge it. De-regulation does not represent an anti-gender equality stance as such; however, gender equality is the EU's second article and it should not be abandoned, particularly as 21 governments have written in support and the European Parliament has made clear that they want a Strategy by an overwhelming majority. JM noted that Juncker stated that he could not find enough women Commissioners because member states would not put them forward. The women Commissioners there, however, have powerful posts and are delivering with great success. However, the civil service level is highly male dominated; there are 33 Director-generals and after a re-shuffle the number of women has increased from 6 to 7, despite a target of 40 per cent. Without women in those positions, JM questioned who is standing up for a Strategy.

Ann Dawson (The Haven, Wolverhampton, and Soroptimists) pointed to the importance of WAVE (Women Against Violence Europe), and expressed concern about a lack of will on the part of the British government; for instance, in terms of implementing the Istanbul Convention. JM agreed that alliance-building is essential across the women's movement in Europe and beyond, and noted that

there is still work that must be undertaken to strengthen alliances in civil society, for instance, with the environmental sector and with trade unions. We should ensure that they understand the feminist agenda and integrate it and vice versa. JM called for the need to take an intersectional approach to ensure that we are listening to the realities of life for migrant women, disabled women and so on.

NAWO member Swadeka Ahsun called attention to the main barriers facing Muslim women and women of faith in general from having their voice heard. JM noted the huge issues for ethnic minority women and migrant women across Europe in a context of rising racism. The women's movement is not always effective at integrating the voices of these women and must work to improve. EWL is developing a project to build bridges with Muslim women and a workshop is taking place in London.

NAWO member Jane Grant noted that she had been at the beginning of EWL and was disappointed to hear JM's reflections on the EU's gender agenda; at the beginning, Europe was the inspiration on gender, and Europe was used as an example with which to lobby government. ARL introduced Jane to the meeting, noting she is an honoured NAWO member: she was the first Director of NAWO and founding member of EWL. Jane was acknowledged with applause.

Lynda Dearlove asked JM to speak about EWL's campaign for a Europe free from prostitution: a movement across Europe, which has been proven to be successful given the passing in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in Europe recently of Nordic Model-style legislation. JM responded that there has been a notable momentum and that the campaign is having significant successes. For instance, a Bill passed 10 days ago in the French Parliament for the Nordic model; it is therefore becoming a broader European model. The evidence is increasingly difficult to challenge and it is a campaign that we can win despite the huge challenges that we face with very different laws and perspectives across Europe. However, there is a great deal of energy and confidence within EWL.

6. Chair's report: past and future

ARL addressed the meeting for the final time as Chair, referring to two NAWO documents from 2003 and 2004 which contain policy suggestions and evidence which we could still be circulating today, which is sad. The first is a letter from ARL as NAWO Chair; the second was written by NAWO member and former Honorary Secretary, Janet Harris, consulting members in the context of the 10 year review of the Beijing Platform for Action about their views. ARL commented that the familiarity of the issues addressed and language used causes her to consider how far we have really come in the intervening years especially now in the 20th anniversary of Beijing.

However, ARL also noted the successes and progress, reflecting that in the many years in which she has been involved, NAWO has been through all kinds of ups and downs: near closure, possible mergers (ultimately resisted due to the potential loss of precious NAWO goals and particular strengths such as our ECOSOC status and UKJCW relationship) and lucky breaks. On this latter point, ARL thanked the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, which gave core funding to NAWO for 4 years some years ago, and is now supporting us again by providing funding for the CSW Alliance.

ARL stressed that NAWO has never swerved from our passions and what we really want to do, that is, make the real lives of every girl and woman better; have equality with men but also a transformed society. We know we are not there yet, and ARL made a special plea to never give up, even when it feels like it has all come around again. ARL also recognised that it can be difficult to

work with particular women or women's organisations on occasion; but that it is not for feminists to run down other women or their organisations - it is our job to support each other.

ARL emphasised that work is never done alone, and that whilst she has become rather identified with NAWO, she knows that others will take it on and keep it going. ARL thanked past staff members Isabel Terrison, Sara de Benedictis and Vicki Dabrowski – indeed all those who have worked for NAWO and expressed special gratitude to current staff, Sarah Priest and Rosie Fox, as well as to Megan Brady-Clark for her help with the day and to all those who work as interns and volunteers with NAWO.

ARL thanked past Board members and the current Board for all the work they have done and for their support to ARL, sometimes in particularly tough times. She asked forgiveness of all those present if she focused on some particularly supportive members, thanking Janet Harris as previous Honorary Secretary for her invaluable work, Trustee and former Honorary Secretary Mumtaz Rahim – the first Muslim woman to be elected as a councillor in St Albans - who raised funds for NAWO and held an excellent Inter-faith event in St Albans, and Pat Holden, the current Honorary Secretary. ARL thanked Barbara Cleary for taking up so much work for NAWO and contributing a great deal in terms of care and development of staff, and for her work with Lynda Dearlove and Sarah Priest to produce the Strategic Plan. She expressed deep gratitude to June Jacobs as co-Vice Chair for her friendship as well as her work; and to Lynda Dearlove, with whom she has held long discussions on all issues for NAWO and worked until the last minute to midnight to put in funding applications. ARL thanked Zarin Hainsworth also for her constant support as co-Vice Chair and the source of numerous excellent ideas for NAWO (such as the Elder Awards), who sends a stream of emails and actions as she is travelling the world, raising the bar for women. She also thanked Elizabeth Sclater as the major champion within NAWO for older women.

Finally, ARL thanked everyone present and all members. She noted that the colours of NAWO were on the flowers at the table for the AGM. She explained that the purple, the white and the green, known as the women's colours inherited from the suffragettes, were originally Green for Give, White for Women and Violet for Votes. The Red ribbon represented the suffragists who always knew women needed Rights as well as votes, and the orange was the colour representing the struggle against violence against women and girls, and also that of the UK NGO CSW Alliance. NAWO worked in a long tradition, as well as building our own.

There was vibrant applause for Annette.

7. Announcement of new Board

Annette to introduced the new Board – 'Management Committee' in NAWO's constitution, noting that no election was needed as six Board members had retired and six nominations were received, meeting the maximum number of 11 on the Board. The new Board was introduced, with five current Trustees continuing on the Board:

Zarin Hainsworth (ICGJI), Barbara Cleary (UN Women UK), Pat Holden (Individual NAWO member), Kathryn Hodges (Women@theWell), Jackie Jones (WAW), Wendi Momen (Individual NAWO member), Natalia Dawkins (Trust Women's Project), Faeza Vaid (Muslim Women's Network UK), Penelope Conway (League of Jewish Women), Neda Salmanpour (Advance) and Ann Dawson (The Haven, Wolverhampton).

Zarin Hainsworth welcomed the new Board. ZH commented that everything at NAWO is accomplished through effort and love and we have an abundance of love and sisterliness in NAWO; she thanked those who have built NAWO – staff, volunteers, Trustees and members, all of whom have contributed to a robust, well-functioning organisation. ZH noted that NAWO was established in 1989 and has members (either full or Associate) from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, countries outside the UK, both young and older women; creating the alliance that is represented here today. The new Board is a fantastic team with a diverse skill set poised to take NAWO forward, and the first action will be an operational plan to implement the Strategic Plan. They will work with Four Nations partners, with women across the life cycle (young to old), from diverse backgrounds and marital status. ZH noted that we heard from ARL's comments the love, compassion and encouragement within NAWO.

ZH asked Barbara Cleary to speak who expressed particular thanks to staff who make things happen and gave presents. ZH thanked retiring Trustee Tahirih Danesh for her support to NAWO; expressed gratitude to Lynda Dearlove for her brilliant and meticulous approach - always asking questions about resources! She pointed to Mumtaz Rahim as a wonderful example and highly effective, and applauded June Jacobs for her tireless work for international peace and for bringing to NAWO her humour, care and unswerving loyalty. Finally, she reflected that it is hard to imagine NAWO without Annette; she saved NAWO from oblivion and built it to what it is now. It has been an immense pleasure to work with her as a supportive and generous leader, commenting that it is only when you have stresses and strains that you truly understand each other, and ARL is kind and generous. It has been a blessing to work with her in both the CSW Alliance and NAWO. ZH expressed a profound gratitude to all Trustees stepping down. BC gave all the retiring trustees presents from NAWO.

As the AGM was closing, Margaret Clark was recognised to speak who offered sincere thanks to Annette and Zarin for their hard work and leadership. The AGM was formally closed.

NAWO's members and guests were all invited to the planned afternoon CSW Alliance review of Beijing+20/CSW59 and the launch of the NAWO Elder Awards for women in their eighties or more who, through their activism, advocacy and achievements for women had been nominated by NAWO members to be honoured in their lifetimes.

The AGM was followed immediately by the normal brief business meeting of the new Management Committee/Board to elect officers and fix a first full meeting date.