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## **FAWCO Biennial Conference: The Eternal Woman: Equality, Protection, Empowerment Rome, March 25–28, 2015**

by Carol Strametz

Human rights for women was the recurring theme embedded in the conference program that covered all aspects of FAWCO—global issues, US issues, member clubs, and philanthropy. All the keynote speakers, a panel discussion and some of the sessions focused on human rights for women. This was in support of the FAWCO Target Program 2013-2016: Human Rights for Women—Protecting the Rights and Improving the Lives of Women and Girls Worldwide. In her opening speech Conference Chair Shannon McCarthy quoted Claire Boothe Luce, who founded the American Women's Association of Rome (AWAR) and whose photo was on the podium throughout the conference: "The success of any community is gauged by the role the women play in it". Shannon went on to state "We can all be proud as we work to strengthen the role of women, ensure their rights and advocate for equality, protection and empowerment. By doing this we are putting these words into action". The four days of the biennial conference left the delegates better informed, focused, and motivated to get involved in "something that makes a difference ... that gives a voice to the voiceless" (Cindy McCain).

It was exciting to be one of the 140 FAWCO women attending the conference. The energy, enthusiasm, dedication and commitment of the 140 attendees was contagious. FAWCO has a long list of accomplishments. How are they achieved? Committed women laid the ground work of this organization and a stream of committed women keep it up-to-date and relevant. We are all FAWCO and we can all join in and contribute actively to FAWCO and its goals!

The organization of the conference by AWAR deserves kudos and congratulations! Sincere thanks to Conference Chair Shannon McCarthy (President AWAR), Conference Co-Chair Anna Carlson (FAWCO Representative AWAR) and all the enthusiastic volunteers of AWAR that made this conference so successful and enjoyable! The program, meeting rooms, keynote speakers, panel discussion, the club member events, and pre-conference tours were impressive and all well-chosen. The member events featured the themes "Excavating Ancient Sites", Goddesses, Virgins, Wives and Citizens" and "Eternal Fashion: An Italian Perspective 1945-Present"; the tours were to the Presidential Palace and Ostia Antica.

The evening events were spectacular. Opening night at the Residenza di Ripetta featured a meet and greet, a sit-down dinner, and a performance of the sketch "The Eternal Woman Goddesses" by members of AWAR. The following night we went to the Taverna de' Mercanti in Trastevere, which was the right location to enjoy the medieval atmosphere of Rome over authentic Roman food while connecting to each other at endlessly long tables. The post conference evening took us to the center of Rome to the private 18th century palace, Nuova Circolo degli Scacchi. We were all awed by the interior, the waiters in 19th century uniforms, and the intimate ambience.

For a slide show of the conference, click [here](#).



Residenza di Ripetta



Taverna di' Mercanti



Nuova Circolo degli Scacchi



**FAWCO**

FAWCO has 64 member clubs in 33 countries with 12,000 members.



My-Linh Kunst

My-Linh Kunst, outgoing President, gave a clear picture of what FAWCO is about in her closing remarks. FAWCO mobilizes us through the "power of the collective". "By spending time together, by structuring our hopes and thoughts, and giving them a voice, FAWCO unlocks a gate to our collective future. Individually we are pinpoints of light, intense but lonely; individually, we might be determined, but remain challenged. Individually we can be vocal, but are often silenced by the noise of the gender-unequal world. The outlook changes when we work together, when we respect our similarities and differences; recognize our strength and weaknesses, honor our varied individual passions, and build on the highs and lows of our experiences—we become a collective strength that cannot be ignored .... Through FAWCO your and your club's voices carry far and wide. Through FAWCO your hands are joined with others around the globe. Through FAWCO you stand on the

world stage and your calls echo far and wide ... FAWCO is being heard. We are not yet a roar, but neither are we a whisper ... I believe in FAWCO. I believe in us: women who work to support and promote other women, women who resourcefully work through challenges, women who refuse to be victims, women who never say 'I can't', women who go beyond borders—to follow our passion and leave our footprints in the sand."

She started and ended with a quote for us from Eleanor Roosevelt: "You must do the thing you think that you cannot do."



**New FAWCO Board:**

President Monika Jubayli (AWC Lebanon), First Vice President Sallie Chaballier (AAWE Paris), Second Vice president Leslie Collingridge (Chilterns AWC), Third Vice President Johanna Dishongh (AWC The Hague), Treasurer Patricia Aeby (AWC Bern). Not pictured: Secretary Lesleigh Rizzi (AWC Genoa), Parliamentarian Cora Lee Findley (AW Eastern Province)

The minutes of the General Meetings and the *Annual Report 2014* can be found [here](#). FAWCO Representative Awards were presented to Leslie Collingridge (Chilterns AWC), Amanda Drollinger

(AWC of Central Scotland), Kirstin Haanaes (AWC Oslo), Therese Hartwell (AW Eastern Province) and Hope Moore (Munich IWC).

### FAWCO Resolutions 2015–2017

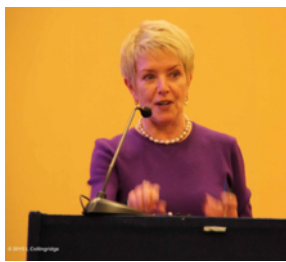
1. To improve the lives of women and girls worldwide, especially in the areas of human rights, health, education and the environment.
2. To advocate for the rights of US citizens and US permanent residents living abroad (US persons living overseas) and keep FAWCO members informed on issues arising in the US that may impact US persons living overseas.
3. To support, strengthen and expand the FAWCO network.
4. To practice good global citizenship and create a better and more peaceful world.

To read the recommendations for the practical implementation of these resolutions, click [here](#).

### Keynote Speakers



Ambassador  
Michele Bond



Linda Douglas



Dr. Moez Doraid with  
My-Linh and Shannon



Cindy McCain

"The theme of human rights permeated the FAWCO Biennial Conference in Rome, with a particular emphasis on human trafficking. Opening keynote speaker, Michele Bond, US Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs, attended the conference to address American Consular Services around the world. However, moved by what she had learned about FAWCO's involvement with Free the Girls, she spent much of her talk describing her attempts to address trafficking when she was posted in Lesotho. Ms. Bond emphasized that a key factor is to empower ordinary citizens, such as taxi drivers, to help identify and assist victims of human trafficking.

In another keynote address, Cindy McCain, wife of US Senator John McCain and a lifelong humanitarian, also spoke about her work to combat human trafficking, including her attempts to raise awareness of the plight of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Continuing the theme of the involvement of ordinary people in the process, Mrs. McCain emphasized that trafficking is going on all around us and that we all have a responsibility to act when we see something that is wrong: If you see something, say something! She expressed the need for tougher penalties for perpetrators and decriminalization for victims, especially children. Mrs. McCain also described a new campaign to recruit prominent male citizens to speak out against human trafficking.

A third keynote speaker, Dr. Moez Doraid from UN Women, presented an overview of the Status of Human Rights for Women and Girls. Dr. Doraid noted that gender inequality is the most pervasive discrimination around the world. Similar to the theme at the UN Commission on the Status of



Women, Dr. Doraid indicated that progress has been made, but we have a long way to go. Read his detailed list of major achievements toward gender equality in the last 20 years, major challenges and suggestions [here](#).

Other presenters, including Linda Douglass, wife of the US Ambassador to Italy, a panel of local experts working on women's human rights issues, and FAUSA member, Paula Lucas, founder of Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center, focused on topics related to violence against women. Thanks to all of these speakers, conference attendees left the conference inspired to redouble their efforts to promote gender equity and human rights for women and girls." (Therese Hartwell, *Human Rights Task Force Bulletin*, April 2015)

### **Panel Discussion: Human Rights for Women and Girls**



The session was moderated by Marilu Lucrezia, foreign correspondent Tg I. She and the panelists Elisa Ercoli (Differenza Donna), Francesca Paltenghi (UNHCR), Eleonora Rizzuto (Bvlgari CSR) and Anna Costanza Baldry (University of Naples, Donna in Rete) discussed various aspects of human rights for women and girls and shared ways to help women all over the world.

Marilu Lucrezia shared dramatic stories about women from Iran, Afghanistan, and Iraq. She informed us of Italy's project to build jails in countries where women do not have the right to go to jail and are prosecuted otherwise.

Elisa Ercoli sounded the alarm on the deterioration of the women's role in Italy and emphasized the need for awareness in the early stages of education. Elenore Rizzuto discussed how private companies can play a role in gender-based violence by empowering women through education and investing in job opportunities and philanthropy. Anna Costanza emphasized that a woman subjected to violence must have help and that volunteer foundations are needed to support women and children.

## FAWCO and the UN

Laurie Richardson brought us up-to-date in the "FAWCO and the UN" session.



Laurie Richardson

FAWCO is a non-governmental organization (NGO) with consultative status to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (UN). FAWCO's UN involvement gives us a voice at an international level on global women's issues in areas of education, environment, health and human rights. There has been an increased focus by FAWCO at the UN with representatives on the boards of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) in Geneva and Vienna and with the Chair of the Advocacy Committee of the Working Group on Girls in New York. The next generation is being engaged through three Youth Program modules—Youth Ambassador, UN Youth Rep and Youth Cultural Volunteers.

The Beijing+20 Forum looked back on the Beijing 4th World Conference on Women in 1995. The Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) was asked to review and appraise the progress women have made in the past 20 years—since Hillary Clinton's spot-on speech in Beijing "Let it be that human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights once and for all"—and look with a critical eye at the long list of needs for women and girls around the world. Seventeen FAWCO women attended the two-day forum in Geneva in November 2014. Beijing+20 CSW took place 9–20 March at UN Headquarters in New York. A delegation of eighteen FAWCO women attended this session. See the inspiring UN video *Empowering Women – Empowering Humanity: Picture It* [here](#). Robin Goldsby (AWC Cologne) and her daughter, Julia Meloy Goldsby (FAWCO Youth Ambassador), were commissioned to write the theme song for the closing ceremony of the forum in Geneva. Click [here](#) to see Robin and Julia perform "Maybe Its You".

FAWCO promotes the ratification by the US Senate of the United Nations international treaty Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In 1980 President Jimmy Carter signed this treaty; however it has never been made a law by congress. The Committee NGO/CSW NY has created an outreach campaign to get 100 cities and their leaders to agree to become "Cities for CEDAW". We should do what we can to reach out to people in cities that could implement this program.

FAWCO also promotes the ratification by the US Senate of the UN treaty Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Hard to believe that child marriage is still permitted with parental consent in New Hampshire for girls who are 13 and for boys who are 14.

FAWCO UN Youth Representative Vali Mitsakis described her UN experience with insight: "FAWCO has helped me understand that in this universe, I don't exist as an individual, but also as part of the worldwide community with a goal to sustain the well-being of my world and the people in it."



### FAWCO Youth Program



Julia Goldsby

Guest speaker Julia Goldsby, FAWCO Youth Ambassador, began with quote of Eleanor Roosevelt: "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams". She ended her talk with "Empower yourself with the 4 C's: Be Compassionate: Don't look away—be aware of the world around you. Be Courageous: Be brave enough to take the first step. Be Curious: Seek out ways you can help. Be Collaborative: Find others who share your passion and desire to help. This is what FAWCO is all about."

## FAWCO and the US

FAWCO advocates the inclusion of American women living overseas in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).



Lucy Laederich

FAWCO had a strong representation at Overseas American Week in Washington, D.C., trying to communicate that „a woman shouldn't have to choose between her country and her husband“. A an important message to all of us is "write to your legislators" and keep informed through the US Liaison Bulletin.

US Liaison Lucy Laederich presented and moderated the session „FAWCO and US Issues“ assisted by Elaine Terlinden and Chairs Judy Furukawa and Mary Stewart Burgher. Michele Bond, US Acting

Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs was the guest. We were brought up-to-date on the latest bank and tax issues, citizenship and overseas voting. Ambassador Bond informed us about consular services that are available for routine work and in emergencies.

## Workshops and Face2Face

There were three workshops—"What's In It for Me?", "Sharing Success", and "A Better Toolkit"—for FAWCO representatives. The challenge for the reps is to bring FAWCO back to their club and get the members activated. There were lengthy discussions on best practices, the difficulty of reaching members and how to approach fund raising.

Elisabeth Abbot gave a very effective workshop on "4 Steps to Effective Leadership". Why is it so hard to implement the four steps—facilitate work, emphasize goals, facilitate interactions, support those around you?

Paula Lucas, founder and director of Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center (AODVC), gave a session on "Weaving a Global Safety Net—You Can Be Part of the Solution". The Global Safety Net Program aims to empower American victims of domestic and sexual violence traveling and living overseas to reach out for help. Since 2011, AODVC has received an increase in calls regarding sexual violence involving American women studying abroad. For this reason she founded Sexual Assault Support and Help for Americans Abroad (SASHAA). We can help by stopping victim blaming, creating a safe place for reporting, and being willing to intervene. To reach young women abroad, SASHAA has a poster which should be posted in places young women frequent overseas. To help, contact [jennifer@866uswomen.org](mailto:jennifer@866uswomen.org).

Melissa Watson and David Terpstra, founders and directors of Free the Girls, gave a workshop on how we can fight human trafficking in small ways through education and engagement programs. Dave also shared stories about women in the Free the Girls project around the world.

Face2Face gave everyone an opportunity to directly speak with members of the task forces on human rights, education, health and environment as well as other areas such as development grants, education awards and club finance. It was a fun and successful session to learn, ask questions and request information. A book table with actual publications from members was also featured.



Therese Hartwell,  
Human Rights Task Force



Paula Lucas and Counselor  
Kathleen Simon



The book table



## The FAWCO Foundation

The foundation's gala dinner with the theme "Three Coins in a Fountain" took place on Friday night of the conference. The foundation was remarkable in all the fun that they put into fund raising, which they have coined fun raising. Many women followed the call to dress as their favorite women. The delegates and guests with friends and family reached deep into their pockets for the online auction, silent auction, live auction, and raffle prizes. Total proceeds of approximately \$56,000, which will be allocated between the FAWCO Foundation programs, were achieved. All proceeds from the Backing Women fundraising campaign are donated in support of the FAWCO Target Program, whose project Free the Girls focuses on human rights for women.

Fund raising is an important aspect of FAWCO and should be pursued by all member clubs to guarantee the philanthropic work of the FAWCO Foundation.



Favorite Women



Susan Wheeler won the *Backing Woman* painting



Best costume winner: Kristin Dubbel Haanaes (left) as Julia Child

### 2015 Education Awards

IT Award for Young Women: Emilie de Bree (mother AWC Surrey)  
Sciences Award: Brennan Todd (mother AWC Düsseldorf)  
Humanities Award: Carter Brace (AWBS International)  
Viola Wheeler Arts Award: Gabi Fagen (mother FAUSA)  
Dual Cultural Award: Allison Moede (AWC Hamburg)  
Award for University Degree Study Programs: Pat Danahey (member AAWE Paris)  
Skills Enhancement Award: Christina Ferrari (member AILO Florence)  
Women in Technology Award: Christine Funke (member AWC Cologne)

**NEED Scholarships** were awarded for university teacher training and midwifery to 7 women in Burkina Faso.

### 2015 Development Grants

Education: AW of Surrey Hope Through Education  
Preventing a Lost Generation: Sending Refugee Children to School (sponsoring club AW of Eastern Province)  
Education: Pam Dahlgren Educating Africa's Children  
Project Mwangi (sponsoring club AWC The Hague)  
Environment: AWC Shanghai A World of Possibilities  
Trees Grow in the Sahel (sponsoring club AIWC Genoa)  
Health: Critical Health Concerns  
KIDS Support Group (sponsoring club AWC Bern)  
Human Rights: American Women of the Eastern Province Skills for Life  
Aziza's Coffee (sponsoring club AW of Eastern Province)



Human Rights: Around the Corner  
Prevention Center for Family and Marital Violence (sponsoring club AWC Brussels)



**New FAWCO Foundation Board:**

Vice President for Programs Kathy Coughlin (FAUSA), Treasurer Jodi Gentilozzi (AWA Qatar), Vice President Communications Shannon McCarthy (AWA Rome), Secretary Liz Janson (Munich IWC), Vice President for Fundraising Mary Adams (AWC The Hague), President Patti Meek (AWC Dublin),