



PGA UN NEWSLETTER

January 2011

SUMMARY

As we start into a new year, a number of issues currently under active consideration and deliberation within the United Nations are of direct and immediate concern/relevance to the Programme Work of PGA.

Below are a number of these key developments that have taken place in January 2011

1. 25/1/2011 – Press Conference by Executive Director of UN Women – Michelle Bachelet

As the largest single United Nations body ever charged with advancing gender equality, the Executive Director noted that she would not only be bold and ambitious, but also practical in building an organization that would make a lasting difference in women's lives. Operational as of 1 January and fresh from its first executive board meeting yesterday, UN Women would back actions by countries and work in partnership with the international community and civil society to ensure that all women and men enjoyed equal opportunities to work and make their own choices about their lives. The agency believed in the enormous capacities of women as leaders and agents of change.

More information may be found by clicking on this link:

http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs//2011/110125_Bachelet.doc.htm

In mid-January 2011, the Executive Director of UN Women met with a small Delegation from PGA, comprised of Ms. Marie Norden, MP (Sweden), Shazia Rafi, Secretary-General and several PGA staff members. The Executive Director exhibited a close interest in PGA's work in this area and requested a work proposal for possible future collaboration between UN Women and PGA.

2. 25/1/2011 Number of alleged rapes in DR Congo over New Year period rises – UN

Army soldiers allegedly raped at least 67 women over the New Year period in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), more than double the number originally thought, United Nations human rights investigators have found.

More information may also be found by clicking on this link:

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37376&Cr=democratic&Cr1=congo>

The issue of impunity, and the need for accountability, for such heinous crimes is one that is of real concern to PGA, in particular in the context of PGA's International Law & Human Rights Programme. The news that the DRC on 21/1/2011 arrested army commander linked to alleged rapes is also a highly salutary development. More information on this at: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37343&Cr=democratic&Cr1=congo> It is also an issue that features writ large in the ongoing trial of JP Bemba at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. PGA continues to work actively with its Members in the DRC to accelerate the process of implementation of the Rome Statute of the ICC which, inter alia, prohibits such crimes.

3. 21/1/2011 – Security Council Presidential Statement on Importance of Institution Building in Post-conflict countries

The Security Council adopted a Presidential Statement in which it acknowledged the need to continue improving its support for those countries in order to sustain peace by creating national bodies that would promote democratic processes and socio-economic development. The Council emphasized the need for the United Nations and the wider international community to better coordinate and more effectively help nations stabilize in the aftermath of conflict, and to make better use of existing national capacities to ensure their Governments could perform such core functions as providing security and protecting civilians, in addition to ensuring respect for the rule of law, economic revitalization and the delivery of basic services.

For more information and a copy of the Statement itself, please click here:

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2011/sc10160.doc.htm>

PGA's Peace & Democracy Programme and International Law & Human Rights Programme are closely connected with conflict resolution, in different ways. During the course of these deliberations in the Security Council, the Chair of PGA's UN Committee, Ambassador Jorge Arguello observed that:

"...a major challenge of the international community was to support countries recovering from conflict. An effective United Nations response required a comprehensive and coordinated strategy based on local needs and priorities to provide humanitarian, political and security assistance as well as promotion of the rule of law and human rights protection. Peacebuilding was primarily a national responsibility in the aftermath of conflict. He underscored the importance of the participation of national authorities in countries emerging from conflict to ensure a united response, so as to tackle the conflict's root causes more effectively. There was no one-size-fits-all approach. Institutional capacity plans must be developed in the immediate wake of conflict."

4. 19/1/2011 - Press Conference by Secretary-General's Special Advisers on Responsibility to Protect, Genocide, in Connection with Situation in Côte d'Ivoire

In the wake of a unanimous Security Council decision (SCR 1967 (2011) of 19 January, 2011) to strengthen by 2,000 troops the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Côte d'Ivoire — where a power struggle persists over the presidential election result — the possibility of genocide and related crimes were of grave concern, according to United Nations experts. During the briefing, Francis Deng, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for the Prevention of Genocide, and Edward Luck, the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, said they were disturbed by allegations that the armed forces and militia groups that backed opposing camps in the current political crisis were recruiting and arming ethnic groups allied to each camp. They were also deeply troubled by reports of hate speech that appeared to be aimed at inciting violent attacks against particular ethnic and national groups.

More information may also be found by clicking on this link:

http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs//2011/110119_Guest.doc.htm

For its part, and given its long, close engagement with Cote d'Ivoire, as detailed in the December 2010 Issue of the PGA UN Newsletter, PGA continues to monitor closely the difficult situation and stand-off in Cote d'Ivoire. PGA is also exploring the possibility/usefulness of participation by MPs from both sides of the political aisle in Cote d'Ivoire in a Regional Consultation on ICC Implementation, organized by PGA and the Senate of Liberia, to take place in Monrovia on 9 February, 2011 and in which two senior representatives from the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the UN to Liberia will also participate.