

Summary of the CSW69 & Beijing+30 Debriefing Meeting



On Thursday, April 17th 2025, the debriefing of the 69th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) took place. Civil society organizations and members of the Dutch delegation, including NGO representative Quirine Lengkeek and youth representative Fenna Timsi, gathered in The Hague to reflect on the outcomes of the recent CSW.

A Changing Political Landscape

One of the main themes of the session was how the current political climate has changed the dynamics of international negotiations. Around the world, the rise of far-right ideologies, anti-gender rhetoric, and shrinking civic space has made it harder to reach consensus on basic human rights and gender equality issues.

During CSW69, these tensions were visible in the negotiations. Some countries that had previously supported progressive gender language were more hesitant and obstructive. Reaching an agreement was not easy. [The Political Declaration](#) that was eventually adopted is the result of many hours of negotiation and compromise. It lays out the global commitment to continue working on gender equality but also reflects the difficulties in maintaining unity in the face of backlash. In addition, the CSW decided on the priority themes for the next four years: access to justice (2026), gender equality in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2027), care and support systems (2028) and humanitarian emergencies (2029). This ensures that important issues such as care work and economic justice will remain on the agenda. Moreover,

elderly women are a specific point of attention in next year's CSW. More information on this can be found in [the Multi-year programme of work \(MYPow\)](#).

Many Voices, One Goal

One of the strongest aspects of the CSW69 was the variety of voices that contributed. Besides the official sessions, hundreds of side events were held, organized by diverse NGOs, grassroots organizations, and activists. These events were vital in creating space for people who are often excluded from formal negotiations. However, not everyone was able to attend. Some civil society members were denied access to the U.S., highlighting persistent and increasing issues of exclusion. This led to WO=MEN launching the "[Access Denied](#)" campaign, which brought attention to how difficult it is particularly for stigmatized communities like trans people, human rights defenders and sex workers, to be heard in international spaces. There were great events reflecting on feminist history, like a reimagining of the "Lesbian Tent" from the 1995 Beijing Conference. These spaces helped reclaim and reenergize feminist movements, especially for those who do not always feel represented. The energy at the CSW was described as both inspiring and sobering. While people that were there were glad to connect and share strategies, they also felt the weight of increasing threats to gender equality and women's rights around the world.

Standing Up Against Pushback

One of the key reflections shared during the debriefing was the importance of political courage. Minister Mariëlle Paul, the Dutch State Secretary for Emancipation, made her international debut at CSW69. She used her platform to speak out clearly against anti-gender developments in Hungary and to underline the Netherlands' commitment to human rights. This type of leadership is essential in today's climate. The debriefing emphasized that speaking out internationally in support of women's rights and gender equality is increasingly important, but that at the same time protecting gender equality at home should not be forgotten. Working together in coalitions and building strong political alliances to speak up jointly as much as possible are critical strategies to hold the line.

Analysis Political Declaration

Britt Myren, senior researcher at Atria, presented an analysis of the Political Declaration. This analysis showed a mix of progress and setbacks. On the positive side, the text includes stronger language about groups that are marginalized. Indigenous women, women with disabilities, women living in conflict zones, and refugee women were more specifically acknowledged. There are also good developments around labour rights, including a clear mention of the right to organise and bargain collectively, aligning with International Labour Organization (ILO) standards.

However, several key topics are missing. Most notably, the declaration does not mention sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)—a major disappointment given its central importance

to gender equality. Any mention of intersectionality was taken out, despite being a vital concept to understand how overlapping identities affect people's lives. Climate change is mentioned only briefly, and in vague terms. The declaration avoided strong language on environmental justice, showing that this remains a contested area. Throughout the negotiation process, some terms were weakened. For example, “diversity” was reduced to “diverse,” and references to “youth” were changed to “current and future generations.” While these may seem like small wording changes, they reflect deeper political resistance and caution among negotiators. The Dutch delegation was able to include many of its priorities in the final documents. That success is encouraging but should not be taken for granted, as it required great effort and careful navigation of complex political dynamics.

Overall, the Political Declaration reflects both the progress that is still possible and the very real pressures that are pushing back against gender equality. It underlines how hard it is becoming to maintain even basic agreements at the global level. At the same time, this Political Declaration is stronger than many had expected, especially in a context where countries opposed even the mentioning of the word ‘gender’. The consensus based outcome document can therefore be considered as an important achievement in itself.

Looking Ahead with Caution

There was a sense of cautious optimism about the outcomes of CSW69, but also concern about what lies ahead. With the U.S. now joining the CSW as one of its 45 geographically distributed members and the political climate having become more polarized, many fear that future sessions might move away from consensus-building toward voting. This is what the U.S. tried to do during the CSW69 as well, but unsuccessfully as they were not a member of the Committee yet. This would fundamentally change how agreements are made and could lead to deeper divisions.

Speaking Up Despite Barriers

Young activists at the CSW spoke about the threats they face, including intimidation and surveillance. In one example, shared by youth representative Fenna Timsi, U.S. immigration officers were reported to be present at a university during activist gatherings—an alarming sign of shrinking civic space even in democratic contexts. In the CSW Youth Dialogue that was chaired by Fenna, young people called for their participation to be taken more seriously. One clear recommendation was ensure that the Youth Dialogue continues to be a formal part of future CSWs. They also emphasized the importance of using ethical data and fighting misinformation as part of their advocacy strategies. Quirine Lengkeek (FNV Mondiaal) as the Dutch NGO representative described a broader view of what happened and what lies ahead. “It will be difficult to keep showing up when funding is reduced, when travel is restricted, and when transphobia continues to appear—even after formal commitments are made,” shares Quirine, the last part referring to the anti-trans statements by numerous government representatives during the CSW closing ceremony. Some described CSW69 as a kind of “goodbye tour” for civil society

members who may not be able to return due to these increasing barriers and risks. Still, there was appreciation for the resilience shown by Dutch civil society, which stood in solidarity with global partners and tried to amplify their voices in every space available.

Working Together for Change

The group discussions that followed the panel stressed the importance of staying connected and continuing the current form of collaboration also in the future. Regardless of the priorities of the Cabinet in place. The Dutch government and civil society including Atria, union FNV Mondiaal and platforms like WO=MEN must continue to collaborate. These networks are vital in holding governments accountable and pushing the agenda forward. One participant summed it up powerfully: “You can cut our funding, but you can’t cut our voice.” As long as people continue to organize, share knowledge, and support one another, the global movement for gender equality will keep moving forward—even in difficult times.

We thank everyone who contributed to CSW69.