

Summary of the CSW70 Debriefing Meeting

On Tuesday 21 April 2026, the civil society debriefing of the 70th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70) took place. Civil society organizations and members of the Dutch government delegation, including NGO representative Joyce Brummelman and youth representative Sarah Meijer, gathered to share updates from and reflect on developments, challenges and achievements from this recent UN Women's Summit. The audience included many representatives from civil society who engaged in the CSW process in some way but also more than a handful who were engaging for the first time. The meeting was organized by WO=MEN and Atria and took place at the office of Plan International in Amsterdam.



Photos by: Floor Mittertreiner (WO=MEN)

Looking back to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing

The meeting kicked off with a screening of a short film ('teaser') about the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. In 1995, 17,000 delegates and 30,000 activists from around the world gathered in Beijing for this historic gathering. To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Beijing agenda, Atria and Vertelburo recorded the stories of eight Dutch women who attended the conference. These interviews form new source material on international solidarity, women's gender equality and the impact of feminist cooperation across borders. The full recordings and transcriptions of the interviews will be kept in Atria's archive.

A historic CSW: changed process and political landscape

The 70th session of the CSW can be considered historic in various ways. Through a series of short panel conversations with different representatives from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) and Foreign Affairs (BZ), the CSW NGO and youth representatives, and inputs from the audience, insights, analysis and experiences were shared about this recent CSW process.

In January 2026 the CSW Bureau decided, at the very last minute, on a new process. The negotiations of the CSW outcome document would start earlier and be completed prior to the planned CSW meeting in New York. The Agreed Conclusions would then be adopted already on the first day of the CSW with the high-level representatives from countries in the room, instead of on the last day. This change had a lot of impact for people engaging in the CSW.

Joyce Brummelman (Plan International), this year's NGO representative in the Dutch government delegation, traveled to New York early to observe the negotiations inside the UN. This was very valuable as she was the only one from Dutch civil society present in New York and one of very few progressive NGO representatives in the negotiation room. As such, she kept civil society - back home and through international collaborations - up to date on what was happening in the negotiations. The negotiations were supposed to end the week before the CSW, but consensus was not reached on time, so they continued. Even on the first day of the CSW, agreement was not reached on the final text of the outcome document.

Dutch civil society and the Women's Rights Caucus (an international feminist civil society platform) strongly objected to this change in the process, because it would significantly limit participation from civil society. The Dutch government also shared and voiced these objections, but this was not supported by many others in the EU. What the process will look like next year is still unknown.

Disruptive role of the United States of America

The USA did not show up in the first week of the CSW negotiations, but once they did, they tried to block progress and consensus in many ways. For example, they proposed, at the very last moment, 8 amendments to delete (previously agreed) language on gender, diversity, combatting disinformation and hate speech, and climate change in the draft outcome document. The EU, represented in this moment by Dutch State Secretary Judith Tielen, then proposed to bundle the amendments together and vote on them as a whole instead of one by one. As a result, the amendments were rejected. As the USA continued to block a consensus, the Agreed Conclusions were – for the first time ever - voted on. All Commission members except for the USA voted in favor of the outcome document, which shows that there is still overwhelming support for the Agreed Conclusions.

“But it is not only the USA who is pushing back on gender equality,” Joyce stresses, “Other conservative countries such as Argentina also got strengthened by the US position.” There also seemed to be more, or more visibly present, representatives from anti-gender civil society organisations part of official delegations and inside the negotiation room.

Also, increased restrictions on travelling to the USA from 75 countries and additional obstacles for people to safely enter and stay in the USA influenced the CSW in an indirect but disruptive way, as these measures resulted in the absence of many participants from both civil society and government delegations.

US resolution to redefine gender

In the second week of the CSW, the USA further tried to influence the scope of the CSW outcome document by proposing a resolution in which they aimed to redefine the term “gender”. This was effectively an attempt to rewrite the historical record and set a dangerous precedent for forcing conservative national positions onto other countries via international resolutions at the CSW. The US resolution ultimately did not get considered thanks to what was called a “no action” motion proposed by, again, the EU. It can, however, be anticipated that the USA will try something similar in other UN fora and at the CSW next year. We all need to strategize on how to deal with this.



Reflection on the Agreed Conclusions

Paula Thijs, senior researcher at Atria presented an analysis of the Agreed Conclusions of the CSW. The text was much shorter and action oriented this year, which made it more difficult to re-affirm important previously agreed language. Many concessions had to be made as even terminology of the Beijing declaration was up for discussion.

Key gains include important progress on language related to the priority theme: access to justice. For example, the text includes ensuring accessible survivor-centered services and affordable or free legal aid and recognizes women and girls in detention – for the first time ever. Progress has also been achieved in women’s rights at work, including the right to organize and bargain collectively. On the downside, the text includes numerous diluted formulations that reduce the level of responsibility of Member States. Several key concepts, such as bodily integrity, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and (gender) diversity have been left out. We also regret that conflict related sexual violence was deleted from the text. Moreover, a conservative paragraph on family-oriented policies was included. The absence of a dedicated paragraph on funding for and meaningful participation of civil society

organisations, feminist groups, youth-led groups and women human rights defenders is a significant loss.

Implementation of Agreed Conclusions in Dutch policy

During the meeting, recommendations for implementation of the Agreed Conclusions in the Netherlands, were also shared. When asked how the Dutch government is going to implement these, the representative of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) answered that they will address the CSW outcomes alongside the GREVIO recommendations and CEDAW Concluding Observations in the new emancipation policy (expected in September).



Civil society, youth and government working together to hold the line

This year's CSW once again highlighted the importance of civil society engagement and collaboration with the government to hold the line for gender equality. The delegation shared that they felt really supported by the insights, expertise and interest from Dutch civil society organizations and individuals engaged in the CSW process as well as by the international Women's Rights Caucus.

Sarah Meijer, this year's youth representative, also played an active role in the process. She collected young people's input to develop a position paper with concrete policy recommendations to improve young people's access to justice. "It was a very interesting opportunity" Sarah says about her engagement in the CSW process and Interactive Youth Dialogue. "The collaboration with the government and civil society organisations was also very fruitful." She shared recommendations to make young people's participation at the CSW more meaningful, for example by appointing the youth representative in September rather than in December to allow for more preparation time. Moving the CSW Interactive Youth Dialogue and other youth engagement sessions to the first week of the CSW would be strategic, as many people and particularly high-level representatives leave after the first week.



To conclude the meeting, Nadia van der Linde, programme manager at WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform, presented a new report called Stronger Together – Exploring Diverse Models of Civil Society and State Engagement in the CSW Cycle (2026) to the delegation. The research, conducted by Feminist Diplomacy Lab, analyses different ways that civil society works together with national governments in the CSW process. It describes different country-level case studies, including the Netherlands, to share lessons and recommendations for improving collaboration and results for gender equality in CSW engagement.

We thank everyone who contributed to the CSW70.