

**23rd International Conference of PPSEAWA
21-28 March 2007
Manukau City, New Zealand**

A Personal Report by International President

Pre-conference activities.

1. The 3rd. Council meeting held at the Centra Airport Hotel included National Presidents or their Head of Delegation as observers. This was a departure from usual practice and proved to be a popular change. It was agreed that at all future meetings of Council the Presidents or Heads of Delegations/representatives would be invited to attend as observers. This should result in better transparency and accountability and a more efficient functioning of the Council.
2. Registration of delegates during the afternoon at the Centra was most convenient as most of the delegates were booked to stay there or nearby.
3. The President's Dinner, was also held in the Centra in the evening. The food was excellent and it was an evening of happy reunions and establishing friendships with new faces. It was an opportunity for briefing on the forthcoming conference and to clarify procedures.

Day 1, Opening Ceremony : New Zealand's Race Relations Day

The Flag ceremony followed by the *Powhiri* were both moving and inspirational. The Maori welcoming ritual, as representing the culture of the indigenous people of Aotearoa rightly took centre stage. The Welcome speech and Keynote address underlined the importance of the conference as a platform for women to make a difference for peace and a challenge for our future deliberations. Moreover, it created the basis for a warm, friendly and tolerant mood which persisted throughout the whole conference, despite the many hiccups.

The special tribute to a special PPSEAWA woman and Past-President, Dr. Elizabeth-Louise Girardi, was presented by Teresa Hintzke in the form of a beautifully constructed DVD. Rev. Valerie Hogan another "pioneer" of PPSEAWA and past 1st. Vice President, gave a touching response.

This was followed by a ceremonial cutting of the PPSEAWA New Zealand birthday cake by the wife of the Governor-General of New Zealand and the International President, in commemoration of the 75th year of the founding of PPSEAWA New Zealand in Wellington on April 1932.

Display and sales tables were notably of a high standard and provided throughout the conference considerable interest and an opportunity to display

cultural items and handicrafts as well help recoup some of the expenses incurred from attending the conference.

Day 2. Women's Responsibilities within the Community – MDG 3

The day started with a powerful and inspirational session led by Ann Kendall (Jenny's sister-in-law), which challenged us to move outside our comfort zones and especially to familiarize ourselves and master the new technologies that our children and grand-children find so easy.

My most enduring memory of the morning session was a new definition of education being the **'art of learning'**. This takes education out of the classroom and takes it to wherever – all around us – in the home, village, town, parliament etc.

A suggestion made which is worthy of serious consideration by Council is **for PPSEAWA to pool funds to give scholarships to members especially young women for training and to help members become computer literate.**

Day 3, Local to Global Partnerships for Development – MDG 8

Another inspirational day – with presentations by our own multi-talented members from Russia, Papua and Japan.

The first session of the afternoon did not follow the printed programme (PPSEAWA members have to learn to be flexible and adaptable!!) – for a variety of reasons beyond our control, but the delegates witnessed and a few participated in an important and significant “ava” and “sua” ceremony performed by a group of the Samoan community living in Auckland to honour the International President who happens to hold a high chiefly title conferred by the Head of State of Samoa.

The First Business Meeting was held later in the afternoon as stated in the programme. Reports from the President and Treasurer were heard and adopted.

The Vale Tree ceremony was conducted by Noeleen Casey (Wellington) with great dignity and respect for our departed sisters.

Several resolutions were tabled, discussed and adopted.

Delegates were treated to a finger-food Reception hosted by the Manukau City Council (a major sponsor of the conference) with a presentation of gifts by PPSEAWA International to The Mayor of Manukau City, the Deputy Mayor and

small gifts from each PPSEAWA member country present to the Manukau Branch of the NCW which provided assistance to the conference.

The highlight of a long day was a visit to the Manuwera Marae. A unique and unforgettable experience! While there are some similarities with Samoan culture, there are still many differences which I find most fascinating.

Day 4. Youth – Locally and Globally

Another departure from the usual format of previous conferences was to embody the session for and about young people, within the main conference. This proved to be most successful and a surprisingly large number of the “older” delegates took part.

The day began with a most interesting and thought-provoking presentation by members of the Taonga Educational Trust Centre. Giving opportunities to teenage mothers through providing a learning environment and support for themselves and their babies. Some of the mothers were there with their children – a visible demonstration of a successful and worthwhile project for helping young teenage mothers rehabilitate themselves.

This was followed by presentations by 3 remarkable young women, Krystina Kauvai from the Cook Islands and the current Miss South Pacific and Kate Marioka and Christina Mitini of the Youth for a Sustainable Future organization. Young women with poise, confidence and a clear sense of where they are going and how to get there!

The group discussions explored the question “What can we do as women to promote gender equality and empower women?” It was most gratifying to see and hear so many young women have their say and four group reports out of 8 were presented by young women. The comments and recommendations were wide ranging and instructional to the “older” PPSEAWA members.

The main message I heard was that if PPSEAWA was really serious about attracting young women members then it a Youth Ambassador should be appointed to advise Council on issues relevant to youth. Also that the absence of young women was not so much that they did not wish to be at conference but because they could not afford to attend. PPSEAWA will need to address this issue and explore the possibility of setting up a Trust Fund to help fund the participation of young members.

The 2nd. Council Meeting followed later at the Centra Hotel.

Day 5 – Living in Harmony

An Interfaith Service coordinated by Mrs. Sailau Simanu was well attended by members, family and friends. It was a celebration of our ethnic, spiritual and

religious diversity which underpins the essence of PPSEAWA and which we proudly uphold.

The New Zealand experience with its ethnic and religious diversity eloquently presented by Mr. Joris de Bries had lessons to share with the world and PPSEAWA.

A tree planting ceremony followed with the Minister of Women, Social and Community Development, of Samoa, Hon. Fiame Naomi Mataafa, initiating the ceremony. All present took part in putting earth around the Pohutukawa tree. We pray that it will grow strong and produce many flowers in memory of our conference in Manukau city.

Cultural items were presented throughout the conference at every opportunity to lift the mood and sharpen attention. I believe this was a popular change to the usual conference programme of having culture items in tandem through one or two evenings.

The 2nd Business Meeting was held later when Country Reports were presented. Later, the nominees for Council positions were invited to give a brief introduction of themselves and what they would like to do for PPSEAWA if elected.

In the evening we were greatly honoured by Australia who hosted a finger-food reception at the Centra Hotel and coordinated a very interesting and challenging presentation by Sarah Kernot, a PhD student from ANU.

Day 6.- Women Sharing Culture

The panel discussion by 3 PPSEAWA members sharing their achievements in their own countries and their cultures underlined the quiet unsung work our members do in their respective settings. I think that such a panel of selected PPSEAWA members should be part of every PPSEAWA conference. While country reports give us insights into the activities and achievements of each chapter there are some who are doing outstanding projects that should be specially highlighted.

The 3rd. Business Meeting followed during which resolutions and recommendations were presented, discussed or amended and finally adopted. These were tabled at the next Council meeting for action.

Elections followed by secret ballot. Special thanks to the Electoral Committee of Ginney..... , Jenny Bennett and chaired by Rahmah Abdul Hamid for conducting a difficult but fair election.

The following were elected to form the new Council.

President : Dr. Viopapa Annandale (Samoa)
1st. Vice President : Mary Cabrera (Australia)
2nd. Vice President: Ravesi Johnston (Fiji)
Secretary : Taina Woodward (USA/Fiji)
Treasurer : Ulrike Siddiqi (Hawaii)

Vice Presidents : Yukiko Backes (Japan)
Alisi Fotu (Tonga)
Pratiwi Sudarmono (Indonesia)
Jenny Kendall (New Zealand)

Director Michiko Homma (Japan)

The official photos were taken of – The outgoing Council
The new Council
The Joint Council
The Presidents and HODs

A meeting of the Joint Council followed and a bid for the next Conference was heard from Indonesia and accepted unanimously. A very popular venue!!

Day 7 – UN Day and Women Making a Difference

The Past President of the UN Association of New Zealand gave an overview of the important work of UN Associations in support of the UN and its mission especially for peace, security and development.

The 3rd Business Meeting was then reconvened with presentations from PPSEAWA UN representatives of which only one was present – Teresa Hintzke who represents PPSEAWA in CONGO.

The Peace Ambassador, Mary Cabrera and the Convener for Project Development, Ravesi Johnston together coordinated a session of country presentations of peace and MDG activities/initiatives. This generated some lively discussions in plenary.

Malaysia presented a resolution and seconded by Samoa to urge the UN and countries to stop wars and the manufacture of weapons for war. The resolution was adopted in principle with the Council asked to reword and reformat appropriately for UN and international distribution.

The delegates also unanimously agreed to focus on MDG 3 for special action during the next 3 years. The Programme Focus Convener to advise members, to Coordinate activities and to report on achievements at the next Conference.

The closing ceremony followed with a special tribute to the PPSEAWA women who were nominated for the 2005 Peace Prize. The names were read out but unfortunately only one was present – Eleitino Paddy Walker.

Eleitino gave a short and moving presentation about her dreams for PPSEAWA and for Peace and explained her particular focus was on children, their education and that she passionately believed in the role of dance, music, drama and art in developing young people with peace in their hearts.

The vote of thanks to the host country, New Zealand was most eloquently proposed by Pratiwi who expressed what was in all our hearts – our most grateful thanks to all those tireless women who made our visit so memorable, for the warmth and hospitality and most importantly for organising a most successful conference.

A very satisfactory outcome for everyone of us.

The 1st meeting of the new Council was held at the Telstra Clear.

The following appointments were made.

Peace Ambassador – Jolene Bosanquet

Youth Ambassador – Manamea Apelu - Oceania region

TBA - Asia region

Councillor at large - Rev Valerie Hogan

Laulu Fetau Mataafa to continue for life

Bulletin editor (Convener for Information & Publicity – Ann Aurelius

Assistant - Cherelle Jackson

The UN representatives were reappointed with a proviso that they attend council meeting wherever possible and particular Conferences.

Conveners of special sub-committees were also appointed!

The highlight of the day was the closing dinner held at the Telstra Clear.

An amazing transformation of what had been our daily venue to a place for a party!!

We were entertained to outstanding performances throughout. The food was superb and a wonderful ending to a most successful conference. Many hugs and tears as we said a last farewells!

A thousand thanks to New Zealand.

**Viopapa Annandale,
PPSEAWA International President
26 April 2007**