



The XXX BPW International General Assembly 21-30 March 2021 Proceedings

On The Theme of Empowering Women to realize the Sustainable Development Goals

**BPW International BOARD MEETINGS
AND**

**THE XXX BPW INTERNATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Held on line March 21-30, 2021**

**BPW INTERNATIONAL: 90 YEARS OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

International Federation of Business & Professional Women

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Dr. Amany Asfour, International President 2017-2021

Mission

BPW International develops the business, professional and leadership potential of women on all levels through advocacy, education, mentoring, networking, skill building, and economic empowerment programmes and projects around the world.

Vision

To achieve a just and equal status for women where decisions are taken in true partnership with men, based on mutual respect, for a more balanced and peaceful world.

Triennium Theme

Empowering women to realize the sustainable development goals

BPW INTERNATIONAL
BPW 76th International Board Meeting Agenda
14:00 – 16:30 hrs. **March 16, 2021**

Agenda

1. President's Opening Remarks
2. Electronic Roll Call
3. Adoption of Standing Order
4. Minutes of 75th Post Congress International Board Meeting and
Minutes of 76th Virtual International Board Meeting
5. Appointments for General Assembly
 - 5.1 Parliamentarian
 - 5.2 Chief Timekeeper
 - 5.3 Assistant Timekeeper
 - 5.4 Scrutineers
 - 5.5 Credentials Committee Chair
 - 5.6 Elections Committee Chair

Nominations Committee members to be nominated by the region and reported at the 1st Session of General Assembly

6. Presentation of the Procedure Manual for Ratification
 - 6.1 Amendments of Procedure Manual according to the Resolutions passed at Cairo Congress
7. Membership
 - 7.1 New Affiliates
 - 7.2 Arrogations
8. Any other business
9. Announcements
10. Post General Assembly 77th International Board Meeting

International President Dr. Amany Asfour welcomed everyone to the 76th International Board Meeting of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women and referred Delegates to the Agenda. In this first Virtual Congress, she explained that the Observers would be in another online room and asked everyone's indulgence in case of any technical difficulties which may arise. All authorized Delegates and Observers had received links, although some people had not yet logged in. The voting would be conducted in compliance with Swiss law, ensuring the event was inclusive. There would be a Roll Call as per the agenda but to save time, this would take the form of an online list to be shared after the meeting.

The Chief Parliamentarian pointed out the need to continue with the Agenda. She asked for the Scrutineers to actively monitored the screens and notify the session Chair when somebody wished to speak.

1. President's Opening Remarks

The International President formally welcomed everyone to the International Board Meeting, being held remotely the year after BPW International's 90th Anniversary in 2020 due to the challenges of COVID-19. She hoped that this meeting would allow BPW International to come together and empower each other under the international objectives. She asked everyone to be supportive and understanding in case of any technical issues during this first virtual General Assembly. Referring to the International Collect and the spirit of BPW International she asked that all business be conducted in peace and kindness as Dr. Lena Madesin Phillips would have wanted.

2. Electronic Roll Call

The International President invited the IT Team to describe how the electronic Roll Call would be taken. A representative from the event organizers SoldOutt explained there were currently 109 people online and showed the live electronic record of people checking in. The International President would have access to the real time data to show that who had checked in already and at what time, via a "Check-in Monitor" dashboard that tracked everybody who had clicked on the "Join now" button on the Welcome page. This list would be shared so that everybody would know who had entered via their personalized links. Normally in physical meetings everybody signed in and their credentials were checked, but the last time the International Board ran a Roll Call it had taken an hour and a half. For this meeting, the personalized link had been emailed to all Delegates, the number of whom had been determined in accordance with the size of their Federations. So this ensured only the authorized Delegates were present. The identities of all those attending the International Board were automatically recorded in the system.

Roll Call of the International Board

Executive Board

President, Dr. Amany Asfour
First Vice President – Membership, Susan M. Jones
Second Vice President, Dr. Catherine Bosshart
Executive Secretary, Bessie Hironimus
Executive Finance Officer, Roshan Strange
Young BPW Representative Neelima Basnet

Regional Coordinators

AFRICA, Abba Mahdi
ASIA-PACIFIC, Dr. Narudee Kiengsiri
EUROPE, Giuseppina (Pinella) Bombaci
LATIN AMERICA, Diana Barragán
NORTH AMERICA, Dawne Williams

Past International Presidents

Sylvia Grace Perry, United Kingdom (1996-1999)
Dr. Patricia Harrison, Australia (1999-2002)
Dr. Antoinette Rüegg, Switzerland (2002-2005)
Dr. Chonchanok Viravan, Thailand (2005-2008)
Elizabeth Benham, USA (2008-2011)
Freda Miriklis, Australia (2011-2014)
Dr. Yasmin Darwich Darwich, Mexico (2014-2017)

No Apologies had been received

3-BPW International Collect

The BPW International Collect was read by the Executive Secretary:

*"Keep us, Oh God, from pettiness.
Let us be large in thought, in word, in deed.
Let us be done with fault-finding and
leave off self-seeking.
May we put away all pretence
and meet each other face to face
without self-pity and without prejudice.
May we never be hasty in judgment
and always generous.
Let us take time for all things;
Make us to grow calm, serene, gentle.
Teach us to put into action our better impulses,
straight-forward and unafraid.
Grant that we may realize it is the little things
that create differences, that in the big things
of life, we are at one.
And may we strive to touch and to know
the great, common human heart of us all.
And Oh Lord God, let us forget not to be kind."*

Point of order

The Executive Secretary had not yet received the list of the Credentials so requested this along with the results of the vote. The International President pointed out that the Credentials had been circulated during 2020. The standing vote was 133, but potentially some of the Executives had changed since then in Clubs or Federations. The Executive Secretary was concerned that many Affiliates had changed their Presidents and Delegates since then, so the updated list of Credentials was important. The International President agreed and said the updated Credentials would be sent to the Executive Secretary.

Point of order

The Executive Secretary asked for the results of the Pre-General Assembly voting so that they could be put it in the Minutes unless the President's Office would be producing the Minutes. The International President replied that only the Scrutineers had the voting results until they were shared with the meeting.

4-Adoption of the Standing Orders

The Parliamentarian explained that everyone at the meeting would receive a copy of the special Standing Orders and the President's Office would circulate them. They were based on the rules of debate from Cairo Congress in 2017 and were compliant under Swiss Law. Covid Law and the Covid-19 Guidelines were also incorporated. The Federal Council had issued a ground-breaking regulation under Article 6A on company meetings. The same rules applied to meetings of the Partnerships, Associations and Cooperatives. The law could require shareholders regardless of the expected number of participants and without observing the invitation deadline to exercise their rights in writing or electronically and by an independent proxy where, in this case, all the Delegates were invited to vote.

She read them out to the meeting:

Virtual BPW General Assembly

Meeting Standing Orders

These Standing Orders are derived from Standing orders that were developed by the Constitutional Advisory Committee from the previous Standing Orders.

It has been adopted to comply with the regulations of the Swiss Law during COVID-19 during the virtual meeting.

(No Voting during the Virtual meeting to comply to the Swiss Law during COVID)

The Standing Orders set out the procedures to be used during the Virtual General Assembly of BPW International at the Online Congress and during the International Board meetings held during the online Congress.

They cover the rules for discussion, who may speak.

The conduct of all meetings is controlled by the general will of the membership, giving a majority decision after a full and fair consideration of the issues involved.

The Standing Orders are designed to provide for constructive and democratic meetings to help, not hinder, the business of the meeting. 'Undue strictness' should never be allowed to intimidate members or limit full participation.

During the International Board Meeting the President chairs the meetings, with the following exceptions:

- the presentation of the President's Report when the First Vice President takes the Chair*
- discussion of the Constitution and Regulations when the Constitution Committee Chairperson takes the Chair*
- discussion on the Resolutions when the Resolutions Committee Chairperson takes the Chair*
- when the Elections Committee Chairperson takes the Chair (refer to the requirements for electronic /online voting).*

If for any reason, the President or any Chair is unavailable for longer than 15 minutes during the virtual meeting to attend (due to technological issues), the First Vice President takes the Chair, until she returns.

Any Chairperson of a General Assembly session or International Board meeting must always be impartial. The Chairperson (including the President) cannot take part in a discussion or speak for or against a motion or Resolution, and should not chair an item of business where she may want to express a view. To take part in the discussion the Chairperson must vacate the Chair at the start of the item of business and announce that the Chair is being passed to another appropriate officer, and must speak from the floor of the meeting.

The Chairperson cannot resume the Chair until the matter has been concluded, and if it is adjourned, must vacate the Chair each time the matter is discussed.

At the pre-Online Congress/ General Assembly / International Board Meeting, the President nominates a Chief Parliamentarian and two (2) other Parliamentarians for approval by the International Board. All Parliamentarians must be familiar with the Constitution, Regulations and Procedure Manual and be impartial members with experience in meeting procedure who advise the Chairperson on issues which arise during discussion.

Parliamentarians cannot be members of the Executive or Delegates, and may not participate in the discussion.

If they have a vote in their own right, they may only exercise their right to vote in secret ballots.

A VOTING (Electronically)

Formal change to Rules of Debate / Standing Orders:

- 1. Voting Delegates, members of the Executive, Chairpersons of Standing Committees and Past Presidents of BPW International may vote online. These are referred to as "Voting Members".*
- 2. Credential Chair must announce the voting strength for online voting of General Assembly / International Board prior to the Call for online voting. Total online voting representation at the General Assembly include eligible voters who also registered to attend the meetings and already pre-identified themselves electronically (e.g. by e-mail) at least two days prior to the meeting. Eligible voters should have access to attend the meeting and/or view its recordings at a set date due to technology/timeframe restrictions.*
- 3. Each Delegate will have an electronic invitation to submit her vote. The online voting method must enable the confirmation of the identity of the voter, such as by unique login and password. Each Executive member, Standing Committee Chairperson and Past President of BPW International has one vote if she does not already hold a vote in any other capacity.*
- 4. Decisions are made by a simple majority of the voting representation, except for constitutional changes which will require two-thirds of voting representation or where otherwise specified in the Regulations or these Rules of Debate. Voting members may choose to abstain, but abstentions are not counted in the total vote.*
- 5. Voting will be held electronically through the International Board and GA where appropriate or necessary through a Secure web-based voting system as per the notifications and formal receipt of emails as noted in item 3 above.*
- 6. As voters can be located in various time zones world-wide, adequate time, of no less than 12 hours, should be given to allow all eligible voters to view the rerun of the recorded session and to hear the debates (e.g. if they missed it due to unstable internet connection or scheduling issue). Then they can cast their votes.*
- 7. A valid quorum is required for a vote to proceed. The quorum is one-third [1/3] of the voting representation at the General Assembly and one-quarter [1/4] of the Board members at a meeting of the International Board.*
- 8. The Scrutinizer of Online Voting for the General Assembly must be nominated by the International President and approved by the International Board prior to General Assembly. The scrutineer should not have a voting right at the General Assembly.*
- 9. The appointment of the Elections Chair, will have no voting rights, will be nominated by the International President and approved by the International Board prior to the General Assembly.*
- 10. The role of the Elections Chair, will be to review the Online voting throughout the General Assembly and International Board meetings, with the support of her committee and appointed scrutineers.*
- 11. During the voting for elections, Election Chair takes the Chair in place of International President.*

B OPEN DISCUSSION AND PRESENTATION OF REPORTS

- 1. After reports have been presented and seconded, discussion is open to Voting Members.*
- 2. No speaker may speak to the same discussion more than once except to establish a **Point of order** or ask one question.*
- 3. Presentation of report is allowed for maximum of 5 minutes, with exception of the report of International President who has 20 minutes*
- 4. Other than for the presentation of reports, no one may speak for more than 2 minutes.*
- 5. Reports are presented and debates take place with voting to adopt the reports through web based secure system. Seconders are required but only to state name and that they will second the report(s).*

C MOTIONS, RESOLUTIONS AND AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND REGULATIONS

1. In these Rules for Debate, “motions” includes only Resolutions and Amendments to the Constitution and the Regulations.
2. Only Voting Members may move and second motions and must present in person at the online meeting.
Motions can be seconded prior to the meeting.
3. No new amendment during the virtual online meeting that requires voting is allowed, unless it is a friendly amendment that the proposer has accepted without the need for vote. It should be presented in writing (e.g. by email) and put on the screen. No new amendments that require voting will be allowed.
4. Time limit for mover of the motion is 3 minutes. The time limit for the seconder of the motion, and for each speaker participating in a debate is 2 minutes per person.
5. After the mover and the seconder has spoken, others wishing to speak to the motion would go through the following process:
 - o Ask those who want to speak in FAVOR (FOR) the motion to raise their hands.
 - o Take a screen capture of the sequence of those who raise their hands in FAVOR
 - o Ask everyone to lower everyone hands
 - o Ask those who want to speak AGAINST the motion to raise their hands.
 - o Take a screen capture of these sequence of those who raise their hands AGAINST
 - o Ask everyone to lower hands
 - o Present the sequences of screen captures of both to the Chairperson

The speaking order will alternate between FOR and AGAINST, given the following criteria:

 - o No one may speak more than once for a motion and no delegation may speak more than twice.
 - o To ensure a fair and democratic process with the online meeting process, those who have not had the opportunity to speak to a prior motions will be provided first opportunity to speak (in respect to for or against the motion).
 - a. The speaker will ensure her video is turned on to verify her identify before she should be allowed to speak. Each speaker must identify herself, her BPW position and her country before she speaks. Online caption of each speaker should also identify her name and her country and (optionally) her BPW position.
 - b. The queues of speakers alternate between FOR or AGAINST. If either one runs out, the debate ends.
 - c. The time limit for the entire debate for each motion is maximum 30 minutes (6 people speaking FOR and 6 people speaking AGAINST).

Point of clarification: once the mover/seconder have spoken the motion is open for debate from the registered delegates, Past President, Executive Board etc. The debate process permits the first speaker that opens the debate to present their argument, for example FOR the motion, then the next speaker must be one AGAINST. If all the speakers are FOR or all AGAINST the motion, only one is permitted, e.g. you can't have three speaking AGAINST in succession.

The mover of the motion has the right of reply for 2 minutes to the discussion but must not introduce any new matters.

Due to the online General Assembly and to comply with the Swiss Code and the practicality of inclusion of all the voting delegates due to the interruption of the internet at any time and the cut off of power and electricity sections that are related to raising motions online or voting online during the real time is suspended due to the timeframes and restrictions of the online procedures.

- 6. A simple majority is required for a Resolution to be passed. A 2/3rds majority is required for an amendment to the Constitution or Regulations to be passed.

D POINTS OF ORDER

1. During discussion on any matter, a Voting Member may raise a Point of order.
A symbol of reaction could be chosen to signify the wish to make a Point of order.
2. The Chair would allow 2 minutes for the person who raises the Point of order, provided that she did not already raise Point of order during that session.
3. No other speaker can raise the same Point of order.

4. The Chairperson may confer with the Parliamentarians and then she will immediately state the ruling.

E RESOLUTIONS

1. An amendment to increase the figures proposed in a Resolution on finance or dues cannot be accepted from the floor of the General Assembly unless it has been circulated to Affiliates 4 months before the General Assembly with the original Resolution.

Due to the online General Assembly the following sections are to be moved to be suspended due to the timeframes and restrictions of the online procedures.

2. Due to the XXX BPW International General Assembly being an online meeting only an emergency Resolution would be accepted if:

- An emergency Resolution may be presented at a General Assembly if it relates to something which has happened since the deadline for receiving Resolutions.
- It must be referred to the Resolutions Committee.
- Is a Resolution that is a direct result on the impact on women and girls.

If the Resolutions Committee decides it qualifies as an emergency Resolution, it will be put to the next voting session of General Assembly for voting to accept it as an emergency Resolution. The Resolution must be circulated to delegates via e-mail at least one day before it is to be discussed. Only a simple majority is required for it to be passed. The emergency Resolution would then be presented by the mover and seconder.

A Constitutional, Regulations and/or procedure manual change is not an emergency Resolution item.

F SUSPENSION OF THE STANDING ORDERS

Due to the COVID regulations according to the Swiss Law and the Impracticality of the voting at real time the standing orders have been modified accordingly. And suspension of some standing orders are done accordingly.

The International President confirmed that all Delegates would receive the Agenda which had already been circulated.

Point of clarification

BPW New Zealand asked if Delegates would be invited to vote on accepting these Standing Orders, in view of the amendments and suspensions contained in them. Delegates would welcome the opportunity to discuss them.

The International President confirmed that was why the Chief Parliamentarian had shared them at the meeting prior to being voted on ahead of the General Assembly sessions.

The CAC Chair commented that it would appear that if voting could not take place at this meeting, it would have to go ahead without Standing Orders.

The International President pointed out that the last International Board meeting had already been held with those Standing Orders but the meeting would be given the opportunity to vote on them as they had been written for virtual meetings.

The CAC Chair added that if there was no vote at this meeting on the adoption of Standing Orders then the meeting would be deemed to be without Standing Orders.

The International President invited advice from the CAC Chair as the plan had been to distribute the Standing Orders, discuss them and then vote on their adoption after the meeting.

The CAC Chair suggested circulating the Standing Orders and asking delegates to respond by email but any approach would require guidance and approval from the Parliamentarians.

The International President reiterated that her intention was to accommodate all the rules while responding to all the challenges brought by online meetings. The Parliamentarian suggested that the meeting should in principle accept that the rules for debate were as per Congress 2017 until all members had the facility to read the proposed changes for online voting. She suggested proceeding with the Agenda in the interests of time. The International President added that the only difference would be that voting was not possible.

Past International President Dr. Pat Harrison had not heard the Standing Orders being read out but agreed with the suggestion of the CAC Chair to circulate the proposed Standing Orders before the General Assembly.

The International President said that the document had already been sent out.

Point of clarification

BPW Australia asked for the Resolutions Chair to provide a rationale for the removal of the Emergency Resolutions and to reconsider this decision as it would be expected for members to have the opportunity to present emergency Resolutions that had come to notice since the time for Resolutions had passed.

The International President replied that the Emergency Resolutions would be requested in accordance with Standing Orders before the General Assembly.

Point of order

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich pointed out that the meeting had not yet approved the Parliamentarians so they were technically unable to act in that role. Also, it was the role of the Executive Secretary to agree the Standing Orders in meetings. Additionally, Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan had already indicated that the Swiss Code did not allow any voting outside the Assembly. She also suggested that attendees should be allowed to access the meetings at least 30 minutes before the start time so that any technical problems and housekeeping issues could be addressed in advance of the sessions.

The International President indicated that the nominations for the Parliamentarians and Timekeepers had been circulated before the meeting and fewer than 50% of attendees had objected to the names. It was not possible to vote during the International Board meeting.

The Executive Secretary stated that it was common procedure to circulate the itemized Agenda for the meeting in advance along with the Standing Orders and not just the program. It was not acceptable to circulate the rules of the meeting after it had begun. With regard to the voting, Zoom had a voting system which could easily be used.

The International President reiterated that fewer than half of the attendees had objected to the proposed Parliamentarians or Timekeepers. It was not possible legally or practically to vote online in the meeting. The key items of the Agenda had already been distributed and it was becoming urgent to begin the meeting.

5. Appointments for the International Board Meeting

- Parliamentarian – Carolyn Savage, BPW New Zealand
- Chief Timekeeper – Ursula Schmid, BPW Switzerland

6. General Assembly Appointments

The following had been appointed by the International President as per the Procedure Manual:

- Credentials Chair – Ann Swain, BPW UK
- Elections Chair – Judith Van Unen, BPW Australia

- Parliamentarians:
 - Carolyn Savage — BPW New Zealand
 - Ojobo Atuluku — BPW Nigeria
 - Dr. Carla Laura Petruzzelli — BPW Italy
- Chief Timekeeper — Ursula Schmid, BPW Switzerland.
- Scrutineers:
 - Sheila Crook, BPW Canada
 - Marion Volk, BPW Germany
 - Fior Ranucoli, BPW Dominican Republic.

Parliamentarian, Carolyn Savage (BPW New Zealand) responded to the comment by the Executive Secretary, under the Regulations R10.3: *“Elections and appointments must comply with the General Assembly guidelines as set out in the Procedure Manual. Parliamentarians, and other positions required for the period of a General Assembly, are nominated by the President and approved by the pre-Congress Meeting of the International Board”*.

Point of order

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich pointed out that the Swiss Code obliged participants to vote during the meeting but this had apparently been overruled. She felt the meeting was invalid as it was not in line with the procedures of the pre-General Assembly meeting of the International Board. She asked for the meeting to be halted until it was clear whether the meeting would be conducted in line with the BPW International Constitution or the Swiss Code.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan pointed out that a previous International Board meeting was held with voting taking place after the meeting on a secure web-based system. She felt she had been mis-quoted. In order to allow everyone eligible to vote to exercise their right without the restriction of time zones they had to be given adequate time (for example, 24 hours or more) to vote after hearing the discussions during the meeting. In the new virtual world, there had to be some flexibility, as had happened at the previous meeting. It would not be practical to cancel the entire General Assembly. She had actually asked for the rules of virtual meetings to be settled in August 2020 but this had not yet happened and she urged members to allow some flexibility.

The Parliamentarian reminded the members that it had been agreed to use the 2017 Rules of Debate until members could review the revised rules of debate to deal with online voting. The Agenda had to be followed. She acknowledged the observation by Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich in that she could not be appointed as Parliamentarian until the appointments of the General Assembly had been confirmed.

BPW Canada agreed that it was extremely important to resolve the question of the Rules of Procedure immediately otherwise it would recur at each point of voting and there was a risk that the whole event could be declared null and void. he proposed that a vote be taken on the delayed voting process and the meeting was reformed afterwards. The other alternative would be to waive that system and conduct an actual vote on some things, such as Amendments to Resolutions in order to avoid constant delays in decision-making.

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BPW Nigeria called for everyone to accommodate the novelty of the situation in order to make progress. She supported the comments by Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan in that delayed votes would be inevitable, due to the time differences. There were obviously some technical issues with accessing the meeting so there should be time outside the various discussions to vote and a flexible, consensual approach was needed.

BPW Hong Kong was hopeful that the meeting would work positively to resolve the challenges. She also felt that the Zoom voting system could be used as all credentials had been confirmed and a quorum seemed to be in place. The Timekeeper needed to ensure that all speakers adhered to their given time as the meeting was already behind schedule.

The Second Vice President — United Nations pointed out that most attendees in Africa were struggling to connect to the internet which would make live voting difficult. Zoom voting were technically not the problem but unpredictable internet access would exclude many African members which would be unfair.

BPW Tanzania agreed that in Africa, internet access was intermittent so it would be difficult to vote online.

BPW Switzerland commented that even in a face-to-face Congress it was not possible for everybody to attend, so although access was complicated for Africa they were in attendance at the meeting so live Zoom voting would at least ensure that everyone could listen to the discussion and vote immediately. This was standard procedure in international meetings across the world.

The International President explained that online voting was not used even at UN meetings, where 72 hours was given after the sessions to consider the debates and achieve consensus. With internet difficulties particularly in Africa, as described by BPW Tanzania, there was a risk that access would be denied to voting parties and the voting strength would be jeopardized.

So with 108 people in the room at the time, it was correct that the system should continue as described for the General Assembly and the Parliamentarians would enforce the Standing Rules already proposed.

7. Amendments to the Procedure Manual following Resolutions passed at Cairo Congress

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair (CAC Chair) described how at the Cairo General Assembly delegates had voted on a number of Internal and External Resolutions to be brought into operation during this triennium by formally incorporating them into BPW International governance documents.

Internal Resolution 8 – Core Governance

Internal Resolution 8 concerned Core Governance, to ensure that everybody had their due information and the following BPW International Core Governance Documents should remain readily available and accessible on the BPW International website: The Policy, Constitution and Procedure Manuals. The Procedure Manual would include a paragraph 4 at the end of article 1.1 Governance to read as follows: *“The BPW International Governance Documents (i) The Constitution and Regulations and (ii) The Procedure Manual are distributed to the Members of the International Board”*.

Secondly, there would be inserted a paragraph at the end of 1.3 on the Meetings of the International Board, again relating to the information to be received and distributed to all International Board Members. At the time when the Resolution was presented, some people had felt they were missing out on the information so this should ensure the situation does not happen again in the future or during this triennium. This paragraph would read:

“Members of the International Board should receive the following documentation:

- ❖ *BPW International Aims as approved by the 2011 BPW international General Assembly*
- ❖ *BPW Mission Statement in full, including reference to all levels of United Nations*
- ❖ *BPW International Congress documentation, including the congress timetable and General Assembly Proceedings.”*

A further final paragraph was to be added at the end of 1.3 on the Meetings of the International Board, as follows:

"Minutes of the BPW International Board meetings must be distributed to all members of the International Board."

Internal Resolution 9 – Annual Leaders' Summit

A final bullet point was to be added to 2.2 The Duties of the Executive:

- *"Make arrangements for an Annual Leaders' Summit of two days to take place immediately before an important event such as the UN CSW in New York."*

The Annual Leaders' Summit was held in New York every year before CSW, except in 2021. The Resolution had been agreed so would be inserted into the Governance document. Also, the following addition was agreed to the end of paragraph

5.1: *"A Regional Leaders' Summit (minimum 3 hours) should take place immediately before each Regional Conference."*

Internal Resolution 10 required the insertion of a new paragraph 10.2 concerning a Permanent Business Network Taskforce:

"A task force established as a permanent business network provides the facility for BPW women owned businesses to be registered with IFBPW and an appropriate networking channel.

Members would provide Mentorships for encouraging existing and new businesses, entrepreneurial growth and supportive networking.

In addition to contact through internet, Facebook and a page on the webpage, Business Network meetings would be held at all regional meetings and at the triennial congresses to enable the Taskforce members to have face to face contact and the opportunity for exchanging knowledge and advice."

The CAC Chair was unsure whether this had been set up to date, but it certainly was agreed. The Procedure Manual was traditionally not updated until this Board meeting.

RESOLUTION 2017-11 Administrative Director. The CAC Chair read out the Resolution:

"BPW International resolves that; without increasing the budget BPW International replace the Director of the President's Office with administrative staff of BPW International and a personal assistant to the President. The Resolution has no financial impact but proposes an organizational change. Instead of appointing a "Director of the President's Office", the International President would hire part-time administrative staff (80% of full time) and a personal assistant (20% of full time).

Whereas the personal assistant is only hired for the term of the President, the administrative staff would be ongoing past one term."

She explained that as in normal practice, when dealing with these constitutional amendments, the first part formed the proposal and once voted as approved, this would replace the previous text in the Governance document. The CAC Chair concluded her report and invited questions on the Internal Resolutions.

Point of order

BPW New Zealand had proposed the Resolution at Cairo about the information that needed to be accessible, so she asked why those core documents had not yet been made available. This would have prevented all the questions being raised. Other International NGOs of a similar size to BPW with members in different continents did not appear to have the same issues because their governance enabled them to adapt to new circumstances. She asked for the core documents listed in Resolution 8 to be made available to everyone at the General Assembly meetings before they continued.

The International President replied that this documentation would have been distributed because there was a Resolution that required voting on vote on each proposed amendment to the Procedure Manual.

Past International President Liz Benham seconded the Point of order from New Zealand that the documentation should be shared with the meeting. She also asked how those waiting to speak would be prioritized in this virtual forum. There seemed to be no logic as to the choice of speaker. This was proving restrictive in terms of fair input and access.

The International President reassured her that the speakers were chosen in order of hand raising, with priority given to those who had not spoken previously in the session.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich seconded what BPW Canada had said in that each issue had to be addressed before progressing to the next. She supported the comments of the CAC Chair but it was important to finalize the proposal of BPW Canada, as it had been seconded.

The International President did not recognize there was a problem. The meeting would abide by the Standing Orders from Cairo Congress simply without the facility to vote in the meeting.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich asked for permission to be granted to BPW Canada to repeat her proposal, then she would second it.

BPW Canada said that if there was a delayed vote to adopt the rules of order for the meeting then technically it would not be possible to have the meeting until those rules of order were adopted. However, if the vote concerned a matter for the general assembly to take place the following week a delayed vote would be fine.

The International President responded by pointing out that the Parliamentarian had stated that the standing orders for Cairo would apply. She repeated that it was not possible to vote live online. The meeting would continue with the reports from the Regional Coordinators.

BPW Spain suggested finding a mechanism to accommodate all time zones. She proposed that it would be fairer to rotate the times of the General Assembly sessions so that members in Taiwan or on the east coast of America could attend comfortably. Secondly, she stressed the importance of enabling the voting to take place live on the floor, pursuant to article 27 of the Swiss Civil Code for COVID regulations which said that all members had to be in the meeting in order to vote.

The International President announced that she had just received messages from BPW Ethiopia, BPW Zambia, and BPW Lebanon stating that they were unable to join the meeting due to Internet issues so it would be unfair to impose live voting on those countries without the necessary infrastructure and technology.

Point of clarification

The First Vice President – Membership asked if she could proceed with the list of abrogations and the necessary voting.

The International President confirmed that she should proceed with presenting the proposed abrogations and new Affiliates. The voting procedure would take place on the web platform after the International Board meeting.

The First Vice President – Membership offered her warm greetings from Sydney, Australia and hoped that the next few days would be enriching for all participants. She began by presenting

those Affiliates who had been approved during this triennium and also requested the approval of the International Board to abrogate those Affiliates who had fallen behind with their dues. She shared a PowerPoint presentation to introduce the new Affiliates, indicating that the same information could also be found on the BPW International website [World Map BPW International \(bpw-international.org\)](http://World Map BPW International (bpw-international.org)).

This triennium had seen the largest membership growth since 2012. There were 12 new countries which had not previously had a BPW presence and the new Affiliates were:

AFRICA	ASIA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BPW Tanzania • BPW Burkina Faso • BPW Ghana • BPW Ouagadougou Burkimbi, Burkina Faso • BPW Zambia • BPW The Congo • BPW Djibouti • BPW Tripoli, Libya 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BPW Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates • BPW Al Ain city, United Arab Emirates • BPW Al Dhafra, United Arab Emirates • BPW Damansara, Malaysia • BPW Philippines • BPW South Mumbai, India • BPW Putrajaya, Malaysia • BPW Calcutta club • BPW Bangsar, Malaysia • BPW Kuching, Malaysia • BPW Lebanon
EUROPE	NORTH AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BPW Georgia • BPW Panevėžys, Lithuania • BPW Vilnius chamber, Lithuania • BPW Yerevan, Armenia • BPW Maiden's Tower, Turkey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BPW The Valley, Anguilla

In the case of Lebanon, the first Federation there had been approved in April 2018 and during the last triennium, BPW Lebanon had opened three brand new Clubs. It had been a lifelong dream of Founder Dr. Lena Madesin Phillips to expand BPW into the Middle East, so this was a wonderful achievement.

This was the first time BPW had had a presence in Tanzania and Burkina Faso where there were now 5 very active Clubs. She congratulated Regional Coordinator – Europe, Pinella Bombaci, for all her work in Georgia, Lithuania and Armenia, and congratulated Regional Coordinator – North America and the Caribbean, Dawne Williams, for her success in overseeing the creation of BPW The Valley in Anguilla, which was the first new Affiliate Club in the Caribbean. BPW Djibouti was the first club in Djibouti.

There were two sisters working as individual BPW members in Slovenia, aiming to set up a new club in that country.

Turkey had been a BPW Federation which had closed but there were now four very strong Clubs planning to re-form a new Federation

There was another individual member in Denmark, hoping to start a new Club.

The First Vice President – Membership reminded the meeting that a country needed three Affiliate Clubs to form an Affiliate Federation with a minimum of 100 members. She was delighted to announce the brand-new Federation of BPW Malaysia.

7.2 Abrogations

The First Vice President – Membership explained that abrogation meant the removal of Clubs and Federations. If a Club or Federation was in arrears for a period of one year or more then under the Constitution, it could be proposed to abrogate it. She presented the list for approval by the International Board.

AFRICA	ASIA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BPW Sudan • BPW Mfoundi, Cameroon • BPW Nairobi, Kenya • BPW Nakuru, Kenya • BPW Carthage, Tunisia • BPW New Johannesburg, South Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BPW Brilliant, Mongolia • BPW Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia • BPW Hyderabad • BPW New Delhi • BPW Bangladesh • BPW Dipolog, Philippines • BPW Makati, Philippines (officially communicated closure) • BPW Colombo, Sri Lanka
EUROPE	LATIN AMERICA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BPW Rijeka Croatia (officially communicated closure) • BPW The Netherlands (officially communicated closure) • BPW Tomsk, Russian Federation • BPW Adana, Turkey • BPW Vilnius, Lithuania 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BPW Chile
NORTH AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BPW Hamilton, Bermuda • BPW Port au Prince, Haiti 	

Meanwhile, BPW Sudan had requested time to pay using a payment plan, so she hoped the International Board would let her remove Sudan from the abrogated list to give them time to pay.

The Clubs BPW Mfoundi, BPW Nairobi, BPW Nakuru, BPW New Johannesburg were to be abrogated. The dues for BPW Jasmine, Tunisia had apparently been paid by BPW Bahrain the day before this meeting.

The International President pointed out that there were 2 clubs in Tunisia: BPW Carthage Tunisia and BPW Jasmine Tunisia. BPW Bahrain had paid the dues for BPW Jasmine Tunisia, so that this Affiliate was no longer under abrogation.

Questions from the Floor

BPW Nigeria commented that some countries in Africa faced many challenges. If BPW were giving Sudan the opportunity to use a payment plan, this should also be offered to BPW Kenya and BPW South Africa. They owed money for the 2019 and 2020 dues.

The First Vice President – Membership explained that letters warning of abrogation were routinely sent out inviting the Affiliate concerned to approach BPW International or their Regional Coordinator. BPW Sudan actioned this but the other Clubs made no effort at all to ask for assistance, hence the listing for abrogation.

Past International President Elizabeth Benham thanked the Vice President for her presentation which showed such exciting growth in the organization. She reiterated that abrogations were never easy so there had always been a policy whereby BPW International made every effort to reach the Clubs on a consistent basis and communicate with them. If they were not communicating at all, even after consistent attempts to contact them, there was no point in moving forward so presumably the Vice President had made every effort to communicate with these Affiliates. Naturally, if abrogated, the Affiliates could always apply to rejoin in the future. BPW Nigeria reiterated that everyone should be given the same opportunities. She suggested that some of the BPW Presidents in Africa could talk to the Affiliates to see why they were not responding and potentially offer to help them. It was difficult to form Affiliates so they should be abrogated with caution. She requested time to contact them before they were abrogated.

The International President thanked her for the suggestion, saying that this would be a fair process for the Clubs in Africa.

The Executive Finance Office Giuseppina Seidita agreed with BPW Nigeria. For Sudan, the Regional Coordinator had asked to use her personal budget for 2019 and 2020 to pay their dues, but that was not possible. For Tunisia, it was BPW Jasmine not Carthage that was to be abrogated.

The Vice President asked BPW Nigeria to confirm that they wanted both BPW Nairobi and BPW New Johannesburg to be given time to pay.

BPW Nigeria confirmed that this was correct for the dues for 2019 and 2020. This should be applied to those in Asia Pacific also.

Vice President Susan Jones said she would ask those two Clubs if they wished to take out payment plans and would give them a time frame by which they have to respond. Failing that, they would be abrogated. BPW Nigeria agreed to this proposal.

The Regional Coordinator – Africa proposed giving Sudan and those in Asia Pacific time to pay their fees. It was not easy to abrogate clubs of federations so it would be better to give them one last chance. She offered to contact them again after being unable to reach them on previous occasions, despite her attempts to contact them.

The Second Vice President – UN agreed, as she had met the President of BPW Nairobi in 2019 and the latter was very motivated about BPW.

The International President had held a meeting with the President of BPW Johannesburg, who had also experienced difficulties so it would be good to offer an extension to them too.

The First Vice President reiterated her concerns with BPW Tunisia.

The International President informed her that one of the affiliates in Tunisia had paid the full fees the day before.

The First Vice President felt that it was unfair to give all Affiliates in Africa except Tunisia a payment extension.

Point of clarification

Past International President Liz Benham said that normally these abrogations were ruled by consensus with the Executive, and it was unfortunate that new communications were only now being shared. There had to be consensus in the approach to abrogations. She proposed that all affiliates should be given by the time except for the ones who owed monies from 2017 and had not responded to communications.

The First Vice President did not agree because it would mean that her successor would inherit these problems and it was necessary to take the time to make the accounts realistic.

Past International President Liz Benham agreed that that was the primary reason because any abnormal situation was carried over into the next triennium. Normally other Affiliates could offer to pay, but the pending amount was sizeable and it had been a policy that BPW International historically sent at least three written communications. After not hearing back from 3 communications, the affiliates were considered inactive.

The International President added that it was not the Executive who decided on abrogation, rather the International Board following a recommendation from the Executive. She referred the meeting back to the proposal from BPW Nigeria to give all affiliates a further chance to settle their dues.

BPW Lebanon thanked the First Vice President – Membership for her presentation and thanked the International President and past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich for their support in enabling BPW Lebanon to become a Federation. She had been experiencing Internet problems so had not heard the full discussion. In fact, Lebanon was subject to constant power cuts so she was concerned about receiving the relevant email to allow her to vote after the meeting.

BPW New Zealand thanked the First Vice President – Membership for her presentation. Considering Africa and Asia Pacific, with regard to abrogation and the two-year rule, she supported that approach. In fact, the Regional Coordinator - Asia Pacific had invited them to support the Cook Islands so BPW New Zealand had paid their membership fees. BPW Bahrain had done the same for one of the Tunisian Clubs.

Point of order

BPW New Zealand pointed out that when voting on this abrogation there had been a Resolution passed in Cairo that the now Executive Secretary, had tabled. It had been debated and amended such that a late penalty fee would be incurred for those who had not paid their dues. She asked if the incurred late payment fees would apply in these new cases.

The International President referred the meeting to the list detailing the primary fees for the Affiliates for which the Executive were recommending abrogation.

BPW Nigeria recommended that those Affiliates facing the most significant financial challenges should be spared the penalty for late payment and given more time to pay.

Before moving on to the Asia Pacific region, the first Vice President membership explained that the five pending applications had been discussed with all regional coordinators because they understood their memberships and were in contact with their affiliates on a daily basis. She had liaised twice with the regional coordinator Asia-Pacific. The abrogations had not been discussed at the Executive Board Meeting.

In Asia-Pacific region, Bangladesh owed €3500 for the membership years 2018 – 2019 – 2020 so was pending abrogation. This was very sad because Bangladesh was very active. Philippines Dipalog and Makati officially closed. BPW Sri Lanka was also pending abrogation which again was very sad as they had suffered greatly as a country due to the Civil War. The First Vice President invited comments.

BPW Singapore commented that from experience she knew that the club was no longer active and allegedly the funds accumulated were subject to court proceedings. She suggested abrogating the club in its current state to allow a new one to form under new leadership.

The Regional Coordinator — Asia Pacific congratulated Malaysia for the new Federation. Regarding abrogations, she wondered whether Mongolia and Mumbai and Calcutta should also be put on the abrogation list. She had asked the Executive Finance Officer to check this.

The Executive Finance Officer had sent an email to the First Vice President the day before as there were two clubs in Mongolia and two clubs in India which could be considered for abrogation.

The First Vice President confirmed that she was working on what she believed to be the latest information but invited the Executive Finance Officer to give her full details, which were BPW Brilliant and BPW Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia and BPW Hyderabad and BPW New Delhi in India.

The Parliamentarian pointed out that Past President & Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair Sylvia Perry had been waiting to speak. She also referred the meeting to Regulation R5.4 which outlined the process for removing an affiliate:

“R5.4 Removing an Affiliate

The International Board may remove an Affiliate where

- *the dues remain unpaid for 1 year and the Affiliate has not communicated with BPW*

International during that year

- *the Affiliate has behaved in a way likely to damage the reputation of BPW International.*

An Affiliate may appeal against being removed, as set out in the Procedure Manual.

Any Affiliate that has been removed cannot claim to be an Affiliate or use the name or logo of BPW.”

The Constitutional Advisory Chair wanted to make a general comment about abrogation without referring to any one affiliate. When these fees had not been paid for five years, the viability of the affiliate should be considered and perhaps it would be better to abrogate them and free them from the financial burden. In this way potentially they could reform later.

The First Vice President— Membership agreed, as two of the new affiliates welcomed in this session had previously closed, however, she did not want to go against the decision of the Executive Board or let this situation continue into the new triennium.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich expressed concern that the first Vice President — Membership had not been fully informed. It was customary or a constitutional obligation to hold an Executive Board Meeting before this meeting, so she asked if this happened. She then asked whether doubts had been raised by the auditors about the viability of those clubs during the triennium. She concluded that although difficult, it was better to abrogate clubs so that they could reorganize in the future and start again.

In response, the First Vice President — Membership said that no Executive Board Meeting had been held prior to this session but that she had been in constant contact with the Regional Coordinators to work on these abrogations.

The International President pointed out that abrogation had been on the Agenda of the Executive Meeting where it was decided that the first Vice President would follow up the potential applications with the Executive Finance Officer and the Regional Coordinators.

The Regional Coordinator — Asia-Pacific emphasized that BPW International did not want to lose any of these Affiliates, but after many attempts some had not replied while others said they were very active locally but simply did not have the money to pay the fees. She wondered what the policy should be in that. Also, for Indonesia she and the five Sub-coordinators had tried very hard to contact them and the regional Finance Officer sent emails to each of those who were overdue and balance more than 70% of the overdue was paid. So, in conclusion, the affiliates previously listed and the additional one that the Executive Finance Office had just added were all likely to be abrogated.

The First Vice President asked the Executive Finance Office to send her the information about those additional Asia Pacific affiliates as the Board would need this when voting.

The Executive Finance Officer said that she had the names of the Affiliates but not the number of members so would send the information.

The Executive Secretary emphasized with the members who were struggling with the unprecedented financial situation. She suggested 2020 be excluded from the calculations because of the Covid situation and referred to a motion presented by a Young BPW

representative that the dues be waived for 2020. She hoped those affiliates struggling to abide by the Constitutional requirement could increase their membership by 5%. Those affiliates making the effort should be kept but the ones who failed to communicate for several years probably should close.

The First Vice President informed her that the abrogation was related to those Affiliates who had not paid membership fees for 2019 and earlier. The situation for 2020 was simply for information but was not being taken into account.

Turning to Europe, the First Vice President – Membership explained that she had received official notification of closure from BPW Croatia and BPW The Netherlands. So there was no question about whether they should be abrogated. However, three clubs: Tomsk, Adana and Vilnius were all active but in financial crisis. BPW Europe had created a fund of COVID-19 solidarity so the First Vice President – Membership had been asked to suspend the abrogation. She wanted to support this if BPW Europe intended to pay the dues for these affiliates; in fact, this practice should be encouraged.

The Regional Coordinator – Asia Pacific stressed the importance of having a single standard to ensure fairness.

The International President asked if anyone was present from BPW Europe to give information about using the special fund to pay the fees.

The Regional Coordinator – Europe confirmed that a Solidarity Fund had been created to help affiliates pay their international fees. BPW Rijeka Croatia and BPW The Netherlands had announced that they would be closing. BPW Tomsk, BPW Adana in Turkey and BPW Vilnius in Lithuania were very active clubs and BPW Europe would try to help them pay, so she suggested to the other Regional Coordinators to consider the possibility of creating their own Solidarity Funds in this moment of economic crisis.

The International President asked the Regional Coordinator – Europe whether she was accepting that the BPW Solidarity Fund would cover the entire three or four years of outstanding dues.

The BPW Regional Coordinator – Europe confirmed that she hoped that the next Coordinator would help too, to be sure that these clubs remained active. If they remained active, funds would be available to pay the outstanding international dues. Another suggestion was for clubs to adopt club in financial difficulties, as was the case with BPW Switzerland and Ukraine. This was an example of best practice that everybody could follow.

The International President agreed that it was always good practice to support clubs in other parts of the world however she wanted to be clear that as the CAC Chair had said, the debt would be continued into the next triennium.

Past International President Elizabeth Benham supported all the discussion preceding her. She wanted to stress again to the International Board there was a huge difference between inactivity and finances. If the clubs were active and were unable to pay, it was really the collective work of the Executive to make sure that they found some supporters or identified a way for the Affiliates to pay their dues. She commended Europe for devising the Solidarity Fund but it was vital to understand whether the clubs were active and/or were facing financial problems. The International Board was being asked to vote on it but they had not had the opportunity to manage this.

The Parliamentarian pointed out that some people had spoken on the same issue more than once and expressed concern about the time.

The First Vice President – Membership concluded by saying that she would add Croatia and The Netherlands to the abrogation list and would recommend suspension of the abrogations of Russia, Turkey and Lithuania under the advice of the Regional Coordinator, because Europe would be helping fund these clubs. In Latin America there was one abrogation pending for BPW Chile who owed USD 5,634 (2017–18–19). Apparently, the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair had notified them that they would be abrogated.

The Regional Coordinator – Latin America wanted to address the International Board regarding this very important issue. BPW Chile had been an issue for the region for many years. She felt

that there were three maybe five clubs ready to take the lead and become a new Federation. Two of these clubs had already presented their documents and have been accepted by the BPW Membership Chair. BPW Santiago had paid their membership fees for 2020 and these had been accepted by the Executive Finance Officer. So once BPW Chile had been formally abrogated, the new clubs could then be accepted. She also asked for this General Assembly sessions to be held at rotating times.

Referring to Chile, the International President responded that no clubs could be accepted until a Federation was abrogated. She also thanked BPW Madrid, who supported clubs in Latin America and it was excellent that BPW clubs were supporting their sister clubs around the world.

In North America, Bermuda had promised payment the day before so if they had paid, the Vice President –Membership would remove them from the abrogation list. Haiti had paid their dues and registration fees for the General Assembly so she welcomed them to the meeting.

The Vice President concluded by saying that she would return to the meeting later with the relevant amendments ready for the voting process.

The International President thanked the First Vice President – Membership, referring to the new affiliates of Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Libya, who were all present at the meeting. She had enjoyed meeting them in person and commended the successes in the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon and Malaysia. This showed the real spirit of BPW International. All these amendments would be taken into consideration before the international board voted on the proposed abrogations.

The Executive Secretary announced that the minutes from the Post Congress International Board Meeting were in the Congress Work Book.

The International President said that acceptance of the minutes would form part of the voting after this International Board Meeting and she asked for the minutes to be recirculated.

The Executive Secretary Bessie Hironimus offered to read out or distribute the minutes from the Executive Board Meeting in December 2017.

The International President asked her to forward them for distribution by the President's Office and then voted on by the International Board as one batch.

The Executive Secretary pointed out that the agenda did not contain an item for "New business" but there were several Points of Order on the floor which normally interrupted the business on the agenda in order to be addressed. One of the points of order had been presented by 6 Executive Officers, 4 Past Presidents and 21 Federations and Affiliates. There was another Point of order that had been presented by BPW Spain, Australia, and New Zealand asking for a recount of the votes. She asked the International President to take these into account.

The International President replied that regarding the votes, official notice had already been received from the scrutineers that the Roberts Rules did not comply with the BPW International constitution.

The Executive Secretary said that this was not the point but the International President reiterated that this was not tabled on the agenda. The official notification of the results had already been circulated and according to the Constitution they were already adopted and carried. Points of order were raised when there was something unconstitutional happening. A request had been received to have the voting online which was not possible, not practical and not according to the rules.

The results of all votes would be overseen by the Scrutineers who were:

- Sheila Crook, BPW Canada
- Marion Volk, BPW Germany
- Fior Ranucoli, BPW Dominican Republic.

The Elections Chair would be Judith Van Unen, BPW Australia.

All the Regional Meetings had taken place and they had nominated their representatives.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair reminded everyone that she had proposed that there should be an Elections Committee nominated for the General Assembly comprised of one person from each region to oversee the elections.

The International President agreed that would happen on the first day of the General Assembly.

BPW Australia queried the International President's statement that the Regions had met and voted for their regional representatives on the Nominations Committee, as the Asia Pacific region had not yet voted and they had two candidates.

The International President clarified that she meant that the regions had nominated their representatives but the voting had not yet happened and would take place before the General Assembly so that the Nominations Committee would be comprised of one representative from each region. As the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair had said, the Election Committee would meet on the first day of the General Assembly.

Regional Coordinator – Asia Pacific thanked BPW Australia for mentioning this, as it was taking time to add the nominees' data to the system. The vote would take place so that the result would be known before the first General Assembly.

Past International President Liz Benham asked which platform the Nominations Committee and the Elections Committee would be given to do their work during the General Assembly?

The International President said they would have special rooms and special communication facilities for them to allow the Elections Chair to meet with her Committee and the Nominations Chair to meet with her committee.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich indicated that when a Point of order was raised during the meeting, it was to be considered by the International Board, not just at the discretion of the International President. Also, the Minutes from the previous International Board Meeting and the Agenda for the forthcoming General Assembly were usually approved during this meeting.

The International President reiterated that rules from a physical meeting could not be applied to a virtual meeting. So, this was not a Point of order.

The Timekeeper reminded the meeting that it was now half an hour over time.

The International President asked those who had already spoken not to request to take the floor again, due to the over-run of the meeting. Voting online could not happen because of problems with the internet connection in places such as Africa and the only other option would be to handle the business of the General Assembly in writing. However, all the arrangements were in place to have the voting on a web-based, secure system with Scrutineers overseeing to make sure that everybody could exercise their voting right. The President's Office would circulate the Minutes and information about the voting.

Point of information

The Executive Secretary asked how the International President could see when a legitimate Point of information was being made among so many raised hands. There was a danger that a question or comment would be missed as by the time they were recognized the issue had already passed.

The International President reiterated that everyone was trying hard. There were several people helping her watch for people wanting to speak, such as Reham from the President's Office and the Parliamentarians. This virtual meeting was an unprecedented scenario.

The Executive Secretary continued her comments by saying that she was simply conveying the information about the 31 signatories.

In conclusion, the International President thanked everyone for their participation at such a successful and fruitful meeting. She gave special thanks to Vice President – Membership for her work in enabling the new Affiliates to join the organization and attend this virtual meeting. BPW International was a great and very inclusive organization. The meeting had been challenging but everyone had warm hearts. She looked forward to the time when everyone could meet face to face again.

The International President closed the meeting.

BPW INTERNATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION 1

21 March 2021

**Chair: Dr. Amany Asfour
BPW International President**

Opening Remarks of the International President

The International President welcomed everyone to the first ever virtual BPW International General Assembly. Given the technical challenges of bringing together members from all over the world these would be unusual sessions and she called for everyone to work together. There was no checklist but every attempt would be made to ensure the General assembly sessions were very constructive.

The International Federation of Business and Professional Women had been operating for 90 years, with the vision of the Founder, Dr. Lena Madesin Philips, of coming together, of social understanding, of justice and peace, of empowering women, of gender equality, of helping each other, of expanding to the whole world. She started Business and Professional Women International during the war, having realized that by uniting women from all over the world she could create peace. She travelled to Europe, she gathered like-minded women to ensure that the voices of women were heard across the world and BPW today was present in over countries. Members had diverse and rich cultures from different backgrounds but with one goal: to empower women, march for equality, and help each other - leaving no women behind.

Her spirit was present at this meeting and provided the inspiration, the motivation to come together. The motivation that women across the world whether coming from rural areas in undeveloped countries, or coming from different developed countries, or women migrants displaced from their countries, or young girls hoping to go school but being prevented from doing so or young girls forced into child marriage, or young entrepreneurs wanting to start their businesses. BPW was there for those young girls, for the women suffering abuse and violence. BPW was there for the women to promote their businesses, for women to amplify their voices, and to have equal pay. BPW was there to support the women owners of small and medium enterprises, to support technology, and ensure access to trade for women entrepreneurs. BPW was there for the women householders or caregivers and for the senior women. BPW was there for the women needing help, access to healthcare, access to education, access to all the tools. BPW was there to lobby and advocate for our women across the world with our governments, with our private sector, with our academia. So, this was the role of BPW International to come together and change the world and raise the voice of BPW International.

The Executive Secretary Bessie Hironimus read out the International Collect:

International Collect

*Keep us, Oh God, from pettiness.
Let us be large in thought, in word, in deed.
Let us be done with fault-finding and
leave off self-seeking.
May we put away all pretense
and meet each other face to face
without self-pity and without prejudice.*

*May we never be hasty in judgment
and always generous.
Let us take time for all things;
Make us to grow calm, serene, gentle.
Teach us to put into action our better impulses,
straight-forward and unafraid.
Grant that we may realize it is the little things
that create differences, that in the big things
of life, we are at one.
And may we strive to touch and to know
the great, common human heart of us all.
And Oh Lord God, let us forget not to be kind.*

Past international President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan read out the Alternate Collect.

Alternate Collect

*We ask that we meet together as women,
Not allowing beliefs, religion, nationality, ethnicity or language to come between us.
That these meetings enable us to move forward and advance the status of women throughout the world.
That the value of women be recognized in our families, our communities, our workplaces, our country and the world.
That we use our good ideas, our knowledge, our experience to promote the worth of women.
That we combine our strengths to move forward in peace, in serenity and in love.
That women of all generations will do their part to achieve harmony and equality among all human beings.*

Apologies and Greetings messages

The Executive Secretary had received no apologies or messages.

Minute of Silence - Memorial

Minute of Silence

IT Demonstration for the Virtual General Assembly

- Electronic Roll Call
- Accessing the Platform
 - o Delegates
 - o Observers
- Accessing Simultaneous Interpretation
- Participating in discussion
- Debating online
- Online identity
- Accessing Reruns

IT Support showed a demonstration of these facilities.

Delegates and Observers would receive an email with the subject and a link to join the BPW International Virtual General Assembly via a 'join up' button which would connect to the "Welcome" page. The "Welcome" page displayed the Terms & Conditions which had to be read and agreed. Then all the sessions would be listed which the Delegate or Observer was eligible to join via Zoom along with a countdown for those different sessions. At the appropriate time, access to the Zoom waiting room was via the 'join now' button. Then the Delegates could join with their

computer audio. Access was the same for Observers but after clicking on the 'join now' button they would be able to watch the session.

Whenever an attendee clicked on the join now button, the system would track this as a check in for the electronic roll call. The International President would have access to this information.

In Zoom, the language could be changed by clicking on the interpretation button. If the source language was too loud, it could be muted. To talk, it was necessary to click on the raised hand first to let The International President know. The IT team would then request the Delegate to un-mute their microphone. After speaking, the Delegates should click on the microphone icon and go back to mute. It was necessary to turn on the camera before speaking, by clicking on the "start video" button.

To identify a participant, there is simply necessary to hover over the image to reveal the full name. About 10 – 20 minutes after the end of each session it would be possible to watch the re-run. A description was given about accessing the live debate.

The International President invited any questions during this first virtual General assembly.

BPW Spain pointed out that the Regional Coordinator – North America was struggling to join the meeting, as was the whole Observers room.

The International President said that there was nobody in the waiting room that she hoped that the IT department would assist with the problems in the Observers room.

The Parliamentarian Carolyn Savage reminded participants about the functionality of raising and lowering the hand.

Point of clarification

Past International President Sylvia Perry pointed out that the agenda and/or the program had not been circulated ahead of the meeting.

The International President said that her office would send everything out again.

BPW Switzerland added further guidance regarding raising and lowering the hands.

The International President reminded everyone that they were bound to be technical issues during this first virtual General assembly, such as using the wrong link for voting following the international board meeting

The Executive Secretary had received numerous messages about participants being unable to enter the meeting and that the Observers could not hear the audio stream.

The International President reassured her that she had already asked the IT Team to assist the Observers Room.

The meeting documentation (Standing Orders and the Agenda) had been made accessible for download via the Google Drive.

Point of order

BPW Australia pointed out that the results had not yet been published for the voting on the member for the Nominations Committee from Asia Pacific: they had been due to be released on March 20.

The International President said that the results had been received by the Scrutineer.

The Regional Coordinator Asia-Pacific announced that Ira Sharma Prasai (BPW Nepal) had been elected as the region's representative on the Nominations Committee.

The International President asked for the result to be sent officially to all the Presidents of the Asia Pacific region once the scrutineers had approved it.

The International President clarified that the IT issue was critical as the link circulated the day before contained the users name and password to be used throughout the General Assembly. The next voting for International Board would use the previous voting link. Her Office would be resending all the documents to the Delegates.

Announcement of General Assembly Officials

Credentials Chair - Dr. Nantarika Chansue, BPW Thailand

Elections Chair - Judith Van Unen, BPW Australia

Parliamentarians:

- Carolyn Savage, BPW New Zealand
- Ojobo Atuluku, BPW Nigeria
- Dr. Carla Laura Petruzzelli, BPW Italy

Chief Timekeeper – Ursula Schmid, BPW Switzerland

Assistant Timekeeper – Andrea Scheller, BPW Switzerland

Constitution Advisory Chair – Past International President Sylvia Perry, BPW UK

Scrutineers:

- Marion Volk, BPW Germany
- Sheila Crook, BPW Canada
- Fior Ranucoli, BPW Dominican Republic.

Resolutions Chair – Vicky Mee, BPW New Zealand

Point of order

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich pointed out that there was confusion about the role of Judith Van Unen as there had not been a vote.

The International President confirmed that Judith Van Unen was Elections Chair for the General Assembly but had been Scrutineer for the International Board meeting.

The Parliamentarian explained that everyone had received a list of clubs that were going to be abrogated and the decisions on Resolutions. All the voting results had been included. She asked for the IT team to ensure that the Italian interpreters feed was set up.

Past International President Liz Benham felt there was a discrepancy between the voting strength and the number of delegates with a vote. Also, it was unclear whether there would be a full election committee or just one Election chair. This was to have been dealt with on the first day of the General Assembly but it did not seem to be on the program.

The Elections Chair had requested the Scrutineers representing the other four regions to join her Elections Committee and when she has heard from them, she would notify the President's Office and the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair. So, there would be one representative from every region on the Elections committee.

The International President thanked her and pointed out that this was in accordance with the BPW governance documents whereby the Elections Chair formed her committee on the first day of the General assembly.

BPW Hong Kong asked about the appointment for the special roles at this General Assembly and whether the committee could circulate confirmation of the votes for each of the special roles, indicating if this had been conducted through the BPW International Board voting platform as she felt this was not the case.

The International President confirmed the voting for International Board was open for all the members of the International Board, as it had been for several months now. The results of the votes had been routinely circulated.

Point of clarification

Parliamentarian Carolyn Savage asked for the men in the meeting to be identified.

The International President confirmed that one was working for the IT team and the others were interpreters.

The Executive Secretary stated that she recognized the name of The International President's lawyer who was attending the meeting but asked the identity of the other person.

Point of order

The Chief Parliamentarian stated that this was not the right place to raise this issue.

The Executive Secretary replied that she had not realized that Ahmed Suleiman was an interpreter from Egypt. She announced that federations and clubs had submitted their nominees for the Nominations Committee and for the Elections Committee and wanted to ensure that the same lists had been sent to the scrutineers.

The International President confirmed that in accordance with the governance documents, the members of the Nominations Committee were to be elected from the regions. The Elections Chair would form her committee on the first day of the General Assembly and the chair had invited all regions to come forward.

The Timekeeper said that the period for this discussion had expired.

BPW Switzerland asked if it would be possible to email the two lists to everybody so that the names could be checked and everyone reassured.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich reiterated the request for everyone to turn on the cameras so that people could be properly identified. She added that the name Ahmed Suleiman appeared on all the papers from the lawyers of the Congress Service Centre and asked for this to be minuted.

Point of order

The Chief Parliamentarian pointed out that this had already been asked and did not form part of the Congress business. The International President had indicated that Mr Suleiman was an interpreter and it was possible for several people have the same name.

The International President invited the Executive Secretary to announce the names of the Nominations committee. A room would be prepared for them to meet virtually in order to elect their Chair. There was some confusion about the representative for Africa region.

Nominations Committee

Africa – Editrudith Lukanga, BPW Tanzania

Asia Pacific – Ira Sharma Prasai, BPW Nepal

Europe – Maria José Mainar Pujol, BPW Spain

Latin America – Dr. Yasmin Darwich, Past International President, BPW Mexico

North America and the Caribbean – Michelle Husby, BPW USA

The International President asked if a member of the Nominations Committee could be a voting delegate.

The Chief Parliamentarian checked if a member with a vote could actually be on the Nominations Committee and according to regulation R10.3, the Past International President could not sit on the Nominations Committee. This had to be an Observer without voting rights.

The International President had attended the meetings of all the regions and wondered how Latin America has conducted an election to nominate their committee member.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich asked The Chief Parliamentarian to recheck the governance documents as she disagreed that the members of the committee should not have a vote. The only reference was that the Chair would not be able to vote.

The Chief Parliamentarian replied that regulation R 10.3 stated that Nomination Chairs and Election Chairs could not vote in Elections.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich said there was nothing about members of the committees not having votes – even the Chair could decide to withdraw her rights to vote.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair agreed that only the Chair was without a vote. The other members could have a vote and if the Chair were taken by someone who was a voting Delegate, then she forfeited her vote. She had already explained this to the Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich.

The International President repeated what the CAC Chair had said, whereby a member of the Nominations Committee would not lose her right to vote unless she was elected the chair of the committee. She then asked how the regional representatives had been elected. The International President had attended the regional meeting but had not witnessed a nomination or election process. She asked for the voting results in that election.

The Regional Coordinator – Latin America reassured her that the voting had been unanimous by email for Dr. Yasmin Darwich to represent the region on the Nominations Committee and Dr. Eunice Cruz for the Elections Committee.

A discussion took place between the International President and the Regional Coordinator – Latin America.

The International President was concerned that the voting had not complied with the BPW International procedure, therefore, she asked for the voting process to be repeated. Until then, the Nominations Committee comprised members from 4 of the 5 regions.

Point of order

Past International President Elizabeth Benham believed that different rules had been applied to North America, which was unacceptable. When a region made their nomination that should be considered final.

The International President was grateful that she had attended the regional meeting as the regional coordinator had not excluded any members from attending however in the Latin America regional meeting Ecuador had apparently been excluded and had filed an official complaint to that effect.

The Chief Parliamentarian has checked the rules and regulations and the nominations for the General Assembly were only permitted positions where no candidate had been nominated prior to the General Assembly.

BPW Mexico responded that nobody in Latin America had been excluded from the invitations to the meeting but BPW Ecuador had sent their apologies. The Finance representative had excused herself but there were two clubs from Ecuador attending the general Assembly, and the International President had left unexpectedly during the meeting.

The International President replied that she had received an official complaint from the President of BPW Ecuador that she had not been invited to this meeting, which concerned her as she felt it was her responsibility to ensure that all Presidents within all regions were officially invited and had a vote at the meeting.

The Chief Parliamentarian reiterated her recommendation that the discussion be closed. She asked for it to be recorded that if Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich was included in the nominations committee, she could not be chair or else she would not have a vote at the general assembly.

The International President continued by saying that the President of BPW Ecuador had sent an official complaint indicating that she had not been invited to the regional meeting which meant that the process had not been followed correctly. She suggested repeating the process with all emails being sent copied to the President's Office for the official representatives of the Latin America region.

The Executive Secretary requested the link for the break out room for the Nominations Committee so that they could hold their meeting.

The International President reminded her that the representative for Latin America was still missing from the nominations committee so the vote had to be re-held.

The Executive Secretary had attended that meeting where the International President had left and two of the three clubs from Ecuador were in attendance. BPW International should not interfere within the actions of the regions or the Affiliates and the highest authority in each region was the regional coordinator, elected by the whole membership of the region.

The International President directed the Executive Secretary to the governance documents, which stated that when there was a national federation in a country, the clubs could not be invited to a meeting while excluding the President of the Federation.

BPW USA was concerned that the International President was allegedly accusing the Regional Coordinator – Latin America and the President of BPW Mexico of not stating the facts, which was inappropriate and divisive.

The President of BPW Ecuador said that her federation worked hard for BPW and the region. She reiterated that she had asked to attend the regional meeting and to have the right to vote. It was wrong to say that she had refused to take part.

The International President agreed, as in her opinion there had been an ongoing problem in Latin America with BPW Ecuador being excluded repeatedly from meetings.

The Chief Parliamentarian repeated the need to finish this discussion. She suggested that as Latin America had a vote, they should use it and confirm with all parties who was to be appointed. This should be handled ethically and democratically. A number of people had not yet received the Agendas or the Standing Orders so she asked for these to be emailed again.

The International President thanked the Chief Parliamentarian, commenting that the Program had already been circulated along with the standing orders which had been voted on so delegates should check their emails. In the meantime, she took everyone through the program.

General Assembly 1 Agenda

- Report by the International President
- Report by the First Vice President – Membership
- Report by the Second Vice president – UN
- Report of the Executive Secretary
- Report of the Executive Finance Officer
- Announcement of the chair of the Nominations Committee

General Assembly voting session 1 would follow, to adopt these reports and the program.

General Assembly 2

Reports of the Regional Coordinators

- Africa
- Asia Pacific
- Europe
- Latin America
- North America and the Caribbean

Internal Resolutions Session

2020 – 14: Cessation of annual increase in membership dues

2020 – 19: Membership dues increase and triennial cost of living adjustment

Speeches by the candidates for International President:

Dr. Catherine Bosshart, BPW Switzerland and France

Hellen Swales, BPW New Zealand.

General Assembly 3

Nominations Committee report

Announcement of the nominees from the floor due to the vacancy for North America and the Caribbean.

Report of the Pilot Taskforce

Internal Resolutions Session

2020 – 16: Results of the pilot group 2014 to 2020

Report of the Constitution Advisory Chair

Constitutional amendments

Amendment C 22: Standing Committees

General Assembly voting session 2 would follow the meeting to adopt the reports of the regional coordinators and the young BPW Representative . There would be voting on the Amendments and Resolutions debated in the general assembly sessions two and three. The vote to elect the International President would also take place.

General Assembly 4

- Opening remarks
- Introduction of candidates for the Executive
- Report of the Young BPW representatives
- Briefing on the reports of the UN representatives

Constitutional amendments

Amendment C1:The registered office

External Resolutions:

1. 2020 – 01 BPW making the achievements of the SDGs is essential
 2. 2020 – 02 Gender responsive budgeting
 3. 2020 – 03 Financial inclusion for women
 4. 2020 – 04 Gender pay gap at retirement
 5. 2020 – 05 Public commitment for women owned businesses
- There would be no debate on external Resolutions.

Elections

The result of the election for International President would be announced.

General Assembly 5

- Opening remarks
- Highlights from Task Force Reports
- Introduction of candidates for standing committee chairs, depending on the result of the vote on the standing committees Resolution

External Resolutions:

1. 2020 – 06: Gender equality in sport

2. 2020 – 07: Skills development for migrant women and recognition of their foreign credentials
3. 2020 – 08: Access for rural women to technology
4. 2020 – 09: Development of national biodiversity strategies
5. 2020 – 10: Provision of alternatives to detention for women and girls

General Assembly voting session 3 would follow the meeting to vote on the adoption of the reports of the UN representatives and the taskforce reports. Another vote would be held on the Amendments and Resolutions debated during general assembly sessions 4 and 5. Then vote would be held to elect the Executive.

General Assembly Session 6

- Opening remarks
- Report of the Immediate Past President
- Presentation of the Cairo conference proceedings
- Disaster relief campaign
- Discussion on future International Congresses

General Assembly voting session 4 would follow the meeting to vote on the adoption of the report of the Immediate Past President, the Cairo Congress proceedings and the election of the standing committee chairs.

General Assembly Session 7

Elections

- Announcement of the result of the vote for the Executive
- Announcement of the result of the vote for Voting Sessions III & IV.
- Presentation and Discussion of the Budget for 2021 – 2023.
- Unfinished Business.

General Assembly voting session V would follow the meeting to vote on the adoption of the Triennium Budget 2021 – 2023

The Awards Ceremony and Global Candle Lighting Ceremony

Awards presentation:

- Dr. Lena Madesin Philips Award
- Badge of Honour awards
- Gertrude Mongella Awards
- President's Awards
- Power to Make a Difference Awards
- Candle Lighting Ceremony

General Assembly Session 8

Elections

- Announcement of the election of Standing Committees
- Announcement of the voting results from sessions 4 and 5
- Unfinished Business
- Acknowledgements by the outgoing International President
- Introduction of the new Executive
- Remarks of the new International President
- Closing Ceremony.

Point of information.

The Executive Secretary asked if it had been decided that the Nominations Committee would not be meeting and there was no need for the link allowing them to go to a breakout room.

The International President said that it was the Latin American election that had to be conducted in accordance with the process. She asked the regional coordinator Latin America to request nominations from the region by contacting all the Presidents in the region by email and copying the President's Office. The link for the breakout room would be circulated.

BPW Cotonou Benin commented that they had still not received the program.

Point of order

BPW Switzerland asked for all the documents to be resent. She then made a Point of order, referring to the continuing discrimination, exploitation, abuse and murder of women around the world at home and in the workplace, asking what BPW International intended to do regarding the withdrawal from the Istanbul convention by the President of Turkey. She wondered whether the executive planned to submit a Resolution to the General Assembly on this issue and asked for it to be included on the agenda.

The International President thanked her for her recommendation which would be discussed at the executive level before a decision was taken but felt that it would not be acceptable to BPW International to remain silent on the issue.

BPW Australia also had delegates who had not received the documentation. She pointed out that Emergency Resolutions had been suspended as part of the General Assembly, unless they were exceptional. She also expressed her personal opinion about the apparent lack of professionalism shown by some members during this session of the General Assembly.

The Timekeeper pointed out that the session had gone beyond its time period.

BPW Spain asked to officially record that on 8 March she had received notification of possible legal action against her from the lawyer of the International President Dr. Amany Asfour. The content of the letter was regrettably based around unfounded and unreal statements alleging a defamatory attitude towards the International President by means of a public You Tube video. She commented that the video had never been made public as it was part of the European President's Meeting that had been organized under the support of the Regional Coordinator Europe and following a voting procedure. The meeting had been arranged after receiving a formal petition from Vice President Dr. Yasmin Darwich addressed to all BPW Europe members. The participants in the video were those officially chosen by the Secretary to deal with the Cairo Congress finance problem.

The Chief Parliamentarian pointed out that this item was not on the Agenda.

The International President agreed with the Chief Parliamentarian that this statement was out of context. She also reminded the meeting that it was being recorded so to avoid BPW being subject to legal action. Such allegations and accusations should not be made in this forum.

Point of order

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich pointed out that the previous version of the program had stated that the Congress proceedings would be presented on Friday by the Past Executive Secretary Catherine Bosshart. The new version said it would be on Friday but the presenter was not indicated. Normally it was the Past International President who presented the congress proceedings to the General Assembly. Also, the congress proceedings – as shown in the Minutes of the previous General Assembly – were to be tabled on the first day not at the end. She was concerned that there was no follow-through on the Points of order being made and asked for clarification on the ruling authority during the session as there seemed to be conflicting decisions from the Chief Parliamentarian and the International President.

The International President explained that Carolyn Savage was the Chief Parliamentarian alongside Parliamentarians Ojobo Atuluku, BPW Nigeria and Dr. Carla Laura Petruzzelli, BPW Italy.

Point of order

BPW UK were concerned

that there has been insufficient time to consider the documents which only some delegates appeared to have, and access was proving difficult.

The International President confirmed that they would be resent via the Google group as well as to all presidents who could then distribute them.

The Constitutional Advisory Chair had noticed that there were two Amendments to the Constitution which should have appeared on the program together: C22 Standing Committees and Amendment C1 the registered office. She also advised participants to speak slower.

The International President explained that the two items had been split due to time pressure, in order to meet the 2 hours per session.

BPW Canada referred to the internal Resolutions and discussion but could not see Resolution 2020 – 19 in the package and wondered when it would be discussed. She was also having problems accessing the Google system. After discussion, it transpired that the link she was referring to could only be used for the voting for the international board and the documents would be posted on the website and the program would be circulated.

Point of order

The Chief Parliamentarian directed that issues relating to Resolutions would be covered by the Resolutions Chair in her report. Currently, under discussion was the agenda. A separate email had been sent to delegates giving access to Google Docs, but there were obviously still some difficulties so the President's Office should email all documents directly to every individual in order to resolve the issue.

The Timekeeper pointed out that the session was overrunning.

BPW Australia asked about the cultural presentation due to take place within the Awards and Global Candle Lighting Ceremony, as this had not been publicized.

The International President explained that she wanted the Candle Lighting Ceremony to be like a social event and it would be pleasant for all regions to share their culture in a special performance: this was the cultural presentation.

BPW USA was concerned that in order to vote on the Resolutions delegates should receive the program urgently.

BPW Australia referred back to a request for clarification regarding the Standing Orders and asked the Chief Parliamentarian to respond about a section in the Standing Orders under Emergency Resolutions after the section emergency Resolution 1 stating the following: "*due to the online General Assembly the following sections are to be moved to be suspended due to the timeframes and restrictions on the online procedures...*" but the following section, section 2 was a re-written section 2 regarding Emergency Resolutions and had added separate clauses. She asked the Chief Parliamentarian whether Emergency Resolutions would not be accepted or that Resolutions would be accepted after referral to the Resolutions Committee based on the new Guidelines that are in the virtual Assembly Standing Orders.

The Chief Parliamentarian replied that the Standing Orders had been reviewed by the Constitutional Advisory Committee, the Resolutions Committee, The Chief Parliamentarians and the International President. Resolution section E, item 2 had been amended to reflect the fact that the meeting was being held online.

The First Vice President - Membership took the chair.

Report of the International President

The International President showed a PowerPoint presentation during her talk.

"So, my dear sisters all over the world I have been really honored to be the President of International Business and Professional Women. I will be sharing with you our journey for BPW International and the President's Office. You know we have already put our International Theme in action as empowering women to realize the Sustainable Development Goals plus one which is sustainable development of BPW International. So, as we all know our founder Dr. Lena Madesin Philips had made history for us and we are pleased that today at the 90th Anniversary of BPW International, since 1930 when this first Congress has been done in Geneva by those who started BPW and we are now the ones who are carrying the torch from them and this the first Executive. So, my vision for BPW International was when I put my candles was really about being inspired Dr. Lena Madesin Philips, "Make no small plans they have no power to stir the blood".

So, in achieving my goals I have put three goals to achieve my vision:

Goal 1: Expanding the BPW network

Goal 2: Expanding BPW Global influence, to be an agent of change with an impact on the daily life of women

Goal 3: Increase BPW branding and visibility.

The visibility of branding has been achieved through different channels, through:

Representation at high levels meetings and conferences, through publications of BPW International and I think it is the first time in the history that BPW International had the project booklet which contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals and we have our BPW Guidelines and we have the BPW COVID 19 Response projects and activities which has really shown the contribution of our BPW International to the global Agenda. We had also BPW International campaigns, equal pay campaign, health awareness campaign, international anniversary in August.

So, in assuming my vision we had three frameworks that we have been working on:

1) The BPW International theme, "Empowering women to realize the Sustainable Development Goals"

*2) The Strategy and the Triad of Empowerment based on the 3 Ps (pillars): **P**ersonal Empowerment Programs, **P**olicy Advocacy and **P**roject development.*

3) The Advocacy pillars:

- Women entrepreneurship*
- Women in trade and access to markets*
- Women on boards,*
- Women and financial inclusion,*
- Women in the digital economy and ICT*
- Women and equal pay*
- Women in STEM education and innovation*
- Women's empowerment principles (WEPS)*
- Government and corporate procurement policy*

The Sectorial Advocacy Pillars were:

- Women in Agriculture and agri-business*
- Women and environment and climate change*
- Women in water and sanitation*
- Women in energy and the green economy*
- Women and health and well-being.*

There were also Special Advocacy Pillars based on the fact that no woman should be left behind:

- Prevention of violence against women,*
- Prevention of child marriage,*

- Empowering women in rural areas,
- Women minorities,
- Women with special needs,
- Women migrants.

So, I have been working with all the Affiliates and all the initiatives with reference also with our partners like ITC - She Trades Global, and equal pay and women's empowerment principles.

We have already introduced a new team, a WEPs team, to all our BPW International members. We have really worked together and I have been visiting all the world to see what they are doing. For instance, we can see here in Senegal the health awareness campaigns on cancer. BPW Mwanza, Tanzania had been distributing packs for young girls and contributing to preventing child marriage. We have already seen the "Return to school project" by BPW Metro Manila. BPW Sudan ran a project on Food Security and empowering women in agriculture. BPW Thailand ran a project on "Better Fabric for a Better World", and with all the Asia Pacific region we have seen an initiative to rescue turtles, meeting the SDGs for climate action and life underwater. We have seen youth and women, and job incubators in Egypt. We have seen also this business development centers and business incubator.

The International President then listed all the BPW International taskforces:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| • Leadership And Lifelong Learning | • BPW Power To Make A Difference |
| • Mentoring | • Twinning |
| • International Legal Advice | • Archives |
| • History | • Business Net |
| • Equal Pay | • Health And Wellbeing |
| • Arts for Peace | • STEM Education |
| • Women Migrants and Global Citizenship | • Entrepreneurship |
| • Women On Boards | • Preventing Child Marriage |
| • Charter of Girls' Rights Task Force | • Prevention of Human Trafficking. |

All these taskforces worked for the real empowerment of women and for this triad of empowerment that I have put as the framework of our work together like how we empowered the women through Personal Empowerment Programs, through career development. All the policy advocacy we have been advocating for better policies for BPW International for women like government procurement, like corporate procurement. Then we have project development in all sectors.

All our Affiliates have been working on awareness, on education, capacity-building, training, young entrepreneurship promotion, access to financial resources, access to technology, information, technical assistance, advocacy and projects – all shown in the BPW International Project Booklet.

I want to share with you my travels since 2017 where I have already, I have travelled to 38 countries with BPW Affiliates already established like Austria, Australia, Thailand, Bahrain, Tunisia, Spain, USA, Jordan, Rwanda, Italy, Ethiopia, Russia, Switzerland, South Africa, UK, Hungary, Morocco, Cyprus, Canada, France, United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, New Zealand, Zambia, Nepal, Ireland, Kenya, Taiwan, India, Ecuador, Belgium, Madagascar, Germany, Dominican Republic, Japan, Croatia, Djibouti, Tanzania. There are also eight countries with no BPW that we already are trying to start and I hope the next Executive will continue, in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mauritania, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Niger and Eswatini.

So, I am now really going through what this was like. (International President was presenting the Power Point and referring to the slides) My first official visit in Austria Danube network this was in Geneva, this was Lusaka in Zambia for the export forum. This was in Canada and I was very honored to go to Canada and to also see the plaque in the parliament in Ottawa which shows that in 1927 our women of BPW was established and how it was here in the parliament that our plaque of BPW International is present. We also have a strong relationship with UNIDO. This was in Russia and in St Petersburg with our members in St Petersburg. This was in Jordan where they have a great project

called Tareeky My Way where you get five women ministers to speak to the young. Then of course I have had my first visits to Italy, to Rome.

So, I have also made partnerships with corporation of Blue Sea Land for life under water and empowering women in fisheries. I have also been to Matera (Italy) which is the capital of culture of Europe, the south east district and we met there and we had a great we also visited to Milan for a health awareness event. Then I visit to Rwanda Kigali and then with UK in Bristol when the Global She Trades was there in Liverpool. I already saw there my sister Gifty who has become now the President of BPW Ghana (Accra). I have been to Tunisia for financial inclusion of women. I have been to Spain; I have been to Bahrain.

I am also strengthening our relation with UN Agencies like UNIDO, UN Women, UNECA, UNITAR, African Union, European Union, Union for Mediterranean (UFM) and of course with Arancha González who at that time was the ITC Executive Director now she is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain and with the UN Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka UN Executive Director, UN in Nairobi because we want to start in Nairobi, in the African Union, with African Union Heads of States and then we have supported opening new clubs and visibility of BPW International. As you can see here Accra Ghana and my sister Gifty who is now there already there. We have been trying also in Cambodia and Comoros and in Mauritania. This is a meeting for financial inclusion in Riyadh according to the G7 and I would like also to tell you that this woman beside me, the Princess, she is now the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia in USA. You can see that I have been there when they started, they put the law for driving. So, I was the first one to be with them, with my sisters there to drive a car in Saudi Arabia after they passed the law.

So, we have seen now also for political will with all of the ministers, the First Lady of Zambia who is now patron of our club in Zambia, addressing Heads of State with all from Uganda, Ghana, Namibia and also with the former President of Ireland, with all of the First Ladies, with Microsoft, with Malawi. This was my African Congress in Cairo. This was in Australia, with all the Global Summit of Women. This was in Tunisia with all our members. This was the candle lighting ceremony in Thailand, this was in the African Union, this is the leaders' summit in New York. This was Asia Pacific in Thailand, this was in Morocco, this was in Budapest the general work and the new network. This was in Turin Italy, Rome Italy, symposium of Mediterranean in Cyprus. The ECOWAS forum in Las Palmas in Spain where I got sponsorship for all the West Africa, African business women BPW from Africa with Spain. With all of my sisters from all over and this was in Zambia my friends, this was the inter-Africa Trade to promote our women. This was in France; this was the anniversary in Rome for the 90th Anniversary in Rome. Then we have this the newly established BPW it was at that time a club Abu Dhabi, then we had the 65th Anniversary in Pakistan where they have already built some schools for their young, first-time education and they have given 40 new houses for the, for those who are, who don't have houses. This was a school I visited the school and the Legal Aid in Pakistan with the young all this first-time education for the young. Then this was supporting BPW Egypt with women with disabilities and special needs. This is the Leaders' Summit in New York and we had a fantastic 1930's style celebrating the Claire Fulcher Dinner. This is a society event with BPW Germany, with BPW New Zealand, Global Society of Friends, visit to Portugal, our visit to New Zealand and the 80th anniversary. Visit to Egypt for African Congress for Women Entrepreneurs and BPW Egypt. We had a very good fashion show and then we had also a visit to Nairobi Kenya, to Nepal, in Ireland Galway with the European Regional Conference in Galway. Then the Global Summit in Switzerland and then we had a continental free trade area in with all the First Ladies of Namibia, the Queen of Eswatini, the ladies of Burkina Faso, with Prime Minister Trudeau. Now UN in New York for women's health meeting and then the march for equal pay in Switzerland. Then this is for the launching of 50 million African women. Speaking with the three heads of State, with President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, President of Zambia, President of Mauritius, for empowering women in trade. This was the North American, the Caribbean memorial. We had and we had this pink night with Sandra and Dawne having a nice pink night then our visit to Taiwan with a piece there, this is India from South Mumbai where we had a very big project regarding the sacred River of Narmada for pollution and the climate change. This was for entrepreneurship in India, I was accompanied by Vice President Susan. Then for economic empowerment of the OECG, then our Latin American region in Quito Ecuador. Then we had our generation equality UN this was with the President of Estonia,

President of Croatia, Prime Minister of New Zealand. Antananarivo in Madagascar, our members and then the Africa Regional Congress in Cairo with all the African Presidents are there. Then Global She Trades in Addis Ababa and then Danube Net in Germany, the gender global summit in Kigali, a visit to Kigali and then the sub-regional conference in Tokyo Japan. Then this, in Saudi Arabia, then again, my trip to Pakistan to see that the school has already been built now. Then the seminar on financial inclusion, then my visit to Bristol UK, and my visit to...then there is equal pay in Spain, there is a Zoom meeting now we start the era of the Zoom meeting in Taiwan. The Zoom meeting on the WEPS, then even with COVID we went to Sicily and Pula Croatia for the Adrionnet meeting. Then speaking on the launch of 50 million women speak. Then my visit to BPW United Arab Emirates, when they became now a federation. Our congratulations to them. Then my visit to Addis Ababa for the candle lighting ceremony. Just that was only last week and then I had a visit to Tanzania last week with all the candle lighting ceremonies from Tanzania.

The International President showed a video and moved the adoption of her report. This was seconded by Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan.

Questions from the Floor

Regional Coordinator - Latin America announced that she had circulated the letter inviting nominations and urged her region to respond promptly.

BPW Australia asked how she could access the Workbook which The International President had mentioned in her report. The International President replied that she hoped it was on the [website](#) but the President's Office would also circulate it. BPW Australia responded that the email that had just been received contains the program but not standing orders. The International President said they would be sent again.

Past International President Liz Benham congratulated the International President for sharing the photographs from all her travels, adding that BPW International seemed to have had the largest budget in its history to use and obviously it had been used quite well for the travel. She continued by commenting that it was unfortunate that no reports had been seen and little communication about any accomplishments with [International Trade Centre](#). She asked if the Business Net committee had been convened or if members had been alerted to any of the events held by ITC in case they could have participated. During the previous term significant steps had been taken by the Business Net taskforce to make it available to everybody.

In response the International President reassured her that the budget this year had been approved by Cairo Congress and was exactly the same budget as the previous triennium with a small alteration. Regarding the ITC, the International President had been attending their business sessions, as mentioned in her report, in her capacity as a member of the steering committee. The past International President had apparently resigned from being the Chair of BusinessNet and she was no longer a member of the ITC Steering Committee. Secondly, Carol Pelton had assumed the Chairmanship of the BusinessNet committee prior to her death at which point the committee ceased work. However, the International President had connected several BPW members with the ITC and they had attended the She Trades Global meeting held in Addis Ababa. There had been direct contact with ITC by many members, as documented in her report.

Past International President Liz Benham clarified that her resignation from the BusinessNet taskforce was because they had tried to convene three meetings with the International President to obtain her idea and vision for the BusinessNet taskforce, but she had refused.

Point of clarification

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich pointed out that the ITC allowed more than two participants on the steering Committee.

The International President replied that when Dr. Darwich had been the International President she had delegated membership of the Steering Committee to Past International President Liz

Benham. As the incumbent International President, it was her right and prerogative to be the member of the Steering Committee, with only one seat available. It was up to the International President to choose her team.

The International President took the chair.

Report of the First Vice President – Membership

The First Vice President – Membership described how it had been both a privilege and an honor to serve as First Vice President – Membership this triennium during her tenth and final year on the International Executive Board. She showed a PowerPoint presentation documenting her amazing memories and wonderful lifelong friendships. Her triennium focus as Membership Chair had been to increase membership and to open BPW in new countries where there was no BPW presence. It had been important for her to visit members face to face and to share their success stories and their challenges. Although she had not implemented a membership challenge Program during her term of office, BPW membership growth had been a triennium success. During 2019 BPW International had experienced the highest membership growth in 12 years. Numbers would undoubtedly decline during the pandemic but she was hopeful that BPW would continue to grow when normality returned.

Thirty new Affiliate clubs had been formed in this triennium, many in countries with no previous BPW presence: Anguilla, Armenia, Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Georgia, Ghana, Libya, Lithuania, Slovenia, Tanzania, Zambia, Burkina Faso, India, Malaysia, Philippines, Turkey and the UAE.

New Federations has been welcomed in Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates, which was especially meaningful as Founder Dr. Lena Madesin Philips has been on her way to promote BPW in the Middle East in 1955 when she died. Only a few days prior to this general assembly the Executive had approved BPW.

On the BPW website, the membership page had replaced the previous roster system. Clicking the link on any country enabled all the Affiliate contact information, emails, Facebook, etc. to be seen. This data was constantly updated by Member Services Director Patricia Maya.

There were several BPW promotional videos on You Tube and the links would be shared in this PowerPoint presentation to be distributed to members. The BPW website included various publications such as the Project booklet, the Affiliate Guide that goes out to all the new Affiliates and the BPW History.

With the advent of Zoom, hundreds of BPW webinars were being produced by members worldwide. Many were recorded on You Tube to give members access across all time zones. The First Vice President - Membership mentioned the BPW Leadership course organized by Dr. Anne Hilty and Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich.

The First Vice President – Membership had travelled to regional conferences and other events in all five regions, also attending sessions at the United Nations in New York, Bangkok and Geneva.

In conclusion, the First Vice President – membership said she was proud to have been a member of BPW for 30 years, serving BPW International for 18 of those years with 3 terms as Chair of International Standing Committees and 2 terms as Regional Coordinator –Asia Pacific. She said that BPW allowed ordinary women to do extraordinary things, making a difference to so many lives. It had been an honor to serve as First Vice President and Member Chair in this triennium.

The report was seconded by past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich.

The First Vice President – Membership added that there were two recommendations in her report:

- 1) That the e-news should be produced monthly and emailed to every Affiliate. It must both inform and engage the reader.
- 2) The member and business pages should be reinstated to bring visibility to members' professions, businesses and successes.

Questions from the Floor

Past International President Sylvia Perry commented that this was a unique record of achievement and long tenure on the Executive, possibly unseen since Past International President Tuulikki Juusela had been in office. The work of Susan Jones in her various roles on the Executive had been excellent, so she hoped that her achievements would be recognized in some way.

The International President thanked her for her proposal.

If the proposal were to be understood as a motion, Past International President Freda Miriklis offered to second it.

The International President reiterated that no motions or voting would take place online.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan requested the report from the Credentials Chair so that the meeting knew the voting strength before voting on line.

Report by the Second Vice President – UN

Dr. Catherine Bosshart had been honored to serve BPW International during the last three and a half years as Second Vice President – UN and referred the meeting to her report in the Workbook. She presented a short overview of her activities.

BPW International continued to work with many UN agencies. The headquarters of the UN was in New York with offices in Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi and special agencies like UNESCO in Paris, FAO in Rome. At UNESCO BPW was prominently positioned with Dr. Marie-Claude Machon-Honoré as head of the NGO Liaison Committee. At FAO Cristina Visconti had been the Chair of the NGO Ad Hoc Group for many years. The Second Vice President – UN had led a group of 27 UN Representatives, regularly collaborating with them. Together, they prepared events for specific conferences. They had also contributed to important UN conferences through Side Events.

The Second Vice President – UN had frequently attended Geneva and New York for the Commission on the Status of Women and the General Assembly. In Vienna, BPW worked with Zonta and Soroptimists almost every year, to organize a Side Event during the conference on crime prevention, and had attended events with BPW Slovenia along with the FAO session in Rome for the annual World Bee Day. Other conferences had been attended in Paris and Tunis.

Since taking office the Second Vice President – UN had wanted to set up a clearly structured information platform so that BPW could react promptly to late notifications from the UN. Ursula Schmid had proven the ideal webmaster for this platform. A special UN webpage www.bpw-un.org was created for BPW, listing invitations to workshops, UN conferences, details of the BPW UN Representatives and their reports submitted to the UN regarding the latest conventions.

During COVID-19, the UN offices were closed and many of the conferences and side events were held online so this enabled many BPW members to attend interesting events which they normally could not do.

At the annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York there were many workshops organized by the Second Vice President – UN or coordinated with BPW International and National Federations. BPW International routinely made oral contributions during this event which was always attended by BPW Delegates from around the world and in 2019 a closed Facebook workgroup was organized by the Second Vice President – UN to inform BPW Delegates regularly on events taking place across the city.

The Second Vice President – UN thanked all the BPW UN Representatives for their dedication, along with UN administrator Ayça Mazman, editor Janice Bancroft–Alexander who ensured accurate English language texts were produced and Ursula Schmid for her website work.

Questions from the floor

Past International President Liz Benham commented that in 2018 she had finished her 20th years as a Delegate to the United Nations in New York, so requested recognition for that achievement and cited the CONGO report.

The Second Vice President – UN reassured her that BPW remained a member of CONGO, having paid all the contributions, but the organization could not be represented on the board once the past International President had become the Finance Officer at CONGO. She apologized for inadvertently omitting her from her report due to the volume of changes among the representatives and members. She complimented the Past International President for her many years' service.

BPW UK had applied to be a Delegate at CSW this year and had received an acknowledgement but nothing further, and was concerned that there seemed to be little BPW involvement at the event. In response, the second Vice President – UN explained that the organization for this year's CSW Delegations was different. At the Side Events BPW had a 40 strong Delegation, but the member from BPW UK had been late in applying so could not be added to the group. The arrangements had been more relaxed this year with members outside the delegation able to register for side events. She promised to note the member's interest for the 2022 event.

Report by the Executive Secretary (Pages 28-29 of the Congress workbook)

Bessie Hironimus greeted all members in the videoconference during this First session of the General Assembly. She had been delighted to meet many members in all five regions during her term of office and refer to her report on pages 28 and 29 the Congress Workbook.

She went on to explain that the role of the Executive Secretary was very demanding and quite challenging. The main responsibility as Executive Secretary was to ensure that BPW constitutional and governance documents were implemented. She described the challenges of a polarized Executive operating under an autocratic management style and referred to several motions on the floor which had seemingly not been allowed as well as a Point of Order by several past International Presidents.

The Executive had not held any of the mandated annual meetings since 2018. However, the BPW International budget for 2019 showed an undocumented expense of around USD16,000. There had been some short meetings and two brief brainstorming sessions to receive information but no decisions or motions were allowed. There had been much difficulty obtaining requested financial information and they had operated for two years without an approved annual budget. Most appointments had just been announced but not voted upon. Her report listed several recommendations for the next triennium.

She asked the General assembly to request the Executive Finance Officer be instructed to pay all outstanding invoices according to the claim forms duly presented with the approval of the Executive. COVID-19 had generated many challenges but the membership continued to achieve great things around the world, as discussed in the many videoconference sessions which had brought members together. She hoped that they would get through the pandemic together and moved the adoption of her report.

Her report was seconded by First Vice President – Membership. There were no questions.

Report by the Executive Finance Officer (Pages 30-35 of the Congress workbook)

Dr. Giuseppina Seidita had been honored to serve as Executive Finance Officer for BPW International for the period 2017-2020. In her Action Plan, her Objective had been to focus on improving communication with members about finances. She had regularly supported federations and clubs and responded to their queries. Her aim had been to ensure that the finances were transparent and correct, and within the budget. She described how she managed the budget with utmost attention as this was the best way to fulfil her mandate.

She had submitted the three annual statements to the International Board according to Procedure Manual 2.3.6. She was waiting for the 2020 statement from the auditors. She routinely sent the Regional Coordinators the reports concerning those federations and clubs who had not paid their dues.

In the overview of financial performance during her triennium, she had tried to keep BPW International's revenue and expenses within the budget approved at the Cairo Congress. In this triennium, BPW International had almost always remained with a positive balance. The main source of income continued to be membership dues. In each year, we approved the dues increase of one euro according to the amendment at the Helsinki Congress. In her opinion it was important to improve the income from individuals, members and Friends of BPW. Her best friend, the late past International President Livia Ricci, had actively promoted BPW Friends in in her home country of Italy. She had sought to improve finances by budgeting, improving communication, by promoting interest in our organization, by best practices. She believed members had to create interest and motivation in BPW and to manage innovative projects and activities especially for the young members.

Referring to her slide presentation, she explained the breakdown of the revenue for the organization. The membership dues for the different regions showed that the best region in BPW was Europe, and within Europe the best federation was BPW Italy with almost 9,000 members. Invoices had already been sent out to collect this year's membership dues.

In view of the financial crisis around the world, she had tried to be conservative with expenses without reducing the services for members.

In 2020, the expenses were within the budget. She then showed the current financial situation which had a good surplus. In 2018 despite having less revenue, the total expenses were carefully kept below the budget by 8.5% and in 2019 the total expenses were 14.8% below budget. The Battersea Fund at the HSBC bank in London stood at £447,460.90 (€500,145), being the proceeds from the sale of the Battersea property in London.

The Executive Finance Officer described two major challenges during her triennium. The first problem was with the HSBC euro account in London because the bank had blocked the account for a year due to confusion over the account signatories from the previous 2 triennia. She had travelled with the International President to London in March and February 2019 to resolve the issue. Meanwhile, BPW International held two accounts at Chase Bank, New York: The Congress account and the Chase savings account. In June 2019, the Executive Secretary Bessie Hironimus as the administrator closed this account and opened a new account without the authorization from The International President or herself as EFO This had created problems because some Affiliates paid their dues into the old account and the money was returned to the Affiliates. Accountant Roshan Strange had told her that the Chase Bank account was closed by the Executive Secretary because it is had been compromised in an attempt of fraud.

She concluded by thanking Affiliates for paying their dues and for promoting BPW International for 90 years and also expressed thanks to the Executive Board and accountant for their work. She also thanked the International President for all her support, guidance and work during this demanding triennium and in conclusion quoted Dr. Lena Madesin Philips: *"if our motive is right, if we have faith, vision and courage, accomplishment must come"*.

She moved her report. It was seconded by Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan.

Questions from the floor

Past International President Sylvia Perry had expected the accounts to be a separate item on the Agenda. She would welcome the opportunity to examine the accounts properly and to ask questions on behalf of the members whose money this was.

Point of order

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich said that the report could not be approved without first receiving the figures and allowing the members to view the report in its entirety, rather than just on screen.

The International President replied that the report would only be adopted after members had voted.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich reiterated that it was not possible to proceed with this report as the Affiliates needed time to review the whole document and its figures. She cited the comment by Past International President Sylvia Perry who had pointed out that this concerned the members' money so it was important to allow them the opportunity to consider the report in full before voting on it.

The International President felt that delegates had received all the necessary financial documents in accordance with the Procedure Manual.

BPW Spain seconded the concerns of Past International Presidents Sylvia Perry and Dr. Yasmin Darwich, confirming that BPW Europe had repeatedly requested a list of figures from the Executive Finance Officer but it had not been received ahead of this General Assembly. She also asked why the account had been opened with two signatories if the BPW International Constitution specified that all accounts had to be opened with three signatories.

The International President thanked her for the question and explained that the account with Chase Bank in America had only one signatory, Executive Secretary Bessie Hironimus, who had allegedly closed this account and opened a new one without any prior notice or authorization from The International President or the Executive Finance Officer. Reference was made to the allegedly fraudulent handling of a cheque.

The Chief Parliamentarian reminded everybody to adhere to the agenda. Discussion was currently focused on the budget which should have been a separate session. The reports had been presented and should be tabled, with the credentials chair providing her report. Any supporting documentation should be circulated in writing to the members.

The Executive Finance Officer reiterated that she was waiting for the 2020 financial statement from the auditors, and would circulate it on receipt.

Past International President Freda Miriklis thanked the Executive Finance Officer for her hard work during this triennium. Looking at the balance sheet under liabilities item 22398 "POCM Advisory Campaign" with a figure of €17,873.81, she pointed out that this amount had been on the balance sheet since 2015, so BPW International should address it. The Prevention on the Child Marriage Project had been funded in the amount of USD 40,000 by the Past Philanthropic Taskforce Chair Miss Liza Lin of Taiwan. USD 20,000 had been paid in 2014 with a further USD20,000 in 2015 for completion of the Africa project. Now as the funds had not been utilized for the purpose originally intended in the past triennium the donor had since respectfully requested their return. The Past International President recognized that this situation predated the mandate of the current Executive Board but urged BPW International to reinstate the USD20,000 owed to the Past Philanthropic Taskforce Chair within 14 days of Congress, so that BPW International could meet its fiduciary duty to comply with this request.

BPW USA – NFBPWC expressed concern that in making her earlier statement the International President had not acted as the neutral party which her role as chair of the meeting demanded. She felt that such statements could potentially influence voters during the election process for the new committees, and the International President was acting inappropriately.

The International President responded that she had been simply stating facts.

The First Vice President – Membership agreed with the previous speaker but wanted to wait for the reports, as had been requested. She was looking forward to seeing the budget versus actuals for 2021 but was also concerned by the Battersea Fund which appeared to be in an account subject to bank charges so the Fund was gaining no interest while losing value. As a business and professional organization, BPW International should address this situation and she asked the Executive Finance Officer to consider options and report back.

BPW Italy expressed concern over the presentation of the 2019 budget and the fact that there were BPW bank accounts which could not be accessed because of the lack of signatory powers.

The second Vice President – UN referred to the concerns of Past International President Freda Miriklis with regard to the Liza Linn Fund. To give the meeting some background, she explained that during the previous triennium the intention had been to refund this amount but they were missing the required documents from the Regional Coordinator. The problem had been that they did not have the details of bank account from which it had originated, and this had prevented the reimbursement. There had been confusion over the source bank account since BPW International had been given details of three separate accounts. The current Executive Finance Officer had been unaware of this situation and had sought advice from the accountant but this had been inconclusive.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair stated that she did not think it was possible to vote for the accounts until the auditor's sign off was in place, which the Executive Finance Officer's report seemed to indicate was still pending.

The International President felt that it was standard procedure at Congress not to have the financial documents for the year in progress, as had been the case at Cairo Congress when Sandra D'Souza was EFO.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair expressed concern about confusing audio input from the interpreters' feed, pointing out that the Executive Finance Officer had just stated that the accounts for the previous year were with the auditor. This meant that the meeting could not approve them.

The Executive Finance Officer replied that it was just the 2020 financial statement which was with the auditor. According to the Procedure Manual she had to submit this to the Executive Board by June 2021. This was the normal process and the Executive Board had already had the accounts for 2017 to 2019.

The International President agreed that the Procedure Manual required the Executive Finance Officer to submit the financial documents at the end of each year but more time was allowed for the audit process in the most recent year.

Point of clarification

The Chief Parliamentarian added that the financial budgets and financial statements should have been a separate agenda item but given the time, the Credentials Report should be presented and then a decision made on whether to continue the meeting.

Report of the Credentials Chair

Voting Strength

Executive Board	11
Past International Presidents	7

Number of Federations	36
Voting delegates of Federations	117
Number of Clubs	31
Voting delegates of Clubs	31
Total Voting Strength	166

Federation	Number of Delegates
Germany	5
Italy	9
Malaysia	1
Switzerland	6
Argentina	3
Australia	3
Austria	3
Bahrain	3
Belgium	3
Brazil	3
Canada	3
Cyprus	3
Ecuador	3
Egypt	3
Estonia	3
Finland	3
France	3
Ireland	3
Japan	3
Jordan	3
Kuwait	3
Lebanon	3
Mexico	3
Morocco	3
Nepal	3
New Zealand	3
Nigeria	3
Pakistan	3
Singapore	3
South Korea	3
Spain	3
Taiwan	3
Thailand	3
UAE	3
United Kingdom	3
USA	3
Associate clubs	
Benin	1
Burkina Faso	1
Cameroon	1
Republic of the Congo	1
Côte d'Ivoire	1

Croatia	1
Djibouti	1
Dominican Republic	1
Ethiopia	1
Georgia	1
Ghana	1
Greece	1
Hong Kong	1
India	1
Libya	1
Madagascar	1
Malta	1
Panama	1
Peru	1
Philippines	1
Romania	1
Russia	1
Rwanda	1
St Kitts	1
Senegal	1
Sierra Leone	1
Sweden	1
Tanzania	1
Turkey	1
Sana'a Yemen	1
Zambia	1

This gave a total of 166 for online voting for this General Assembly as per the documents that had been circulated. Eligible voters were advised to view the re-run of the recorded sessions and hear the debates before casting their votes. These re-runs would be available a few hours after each session until the end of the General Assembly

The International President thanked the Credentials Chair for her Report showing all the Delegates eligible to vote.

The Timekeeper pointed out that the meeting was over-running.

BPW USA asked for the Executive Secretary to be given the chance to address the alleged accusation.

The International President pointed out that the floor could not be yielded while the Chair was presiding. She explained that there were no accusations being made, it was simply a fact that the account had been closed then re-opened.

The Chief Parliamentarian reiterated the need for professional behavior during the meeting. Although this issue was on the table she felt it should be taken out of this forum and also requested that the Credentials Report was issued to the Executive Secretary, in compliance with the Constitution. Then it should be emailed to all countries in attendance.

In view of the time, The International President moved to close the session and reminded everyone that in accordance with the Standing Orders, people could only speak once on a point during a meeting. The Credentials Report would be circulated to all, including to the Executive Secretary. She closed the meeting.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION 2

March 22, 2021 14:00-16:30 hrs. UTC

**Chair: Dr. Amany Asfour
BPW International President**

Opening remarks

The International President welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Agenda and Workbook had been circulated to all participants. She hoped that the meeting would run smoothly and that the time would be respected.

Point of order

Young BPW Otoha Hayashi asked for the record show that the correct name of BPW Japan's president was Masako Hiramatsu.

Agenda

Chair: President Dr. Amany Asfour

- Opening Remarks
- Report of Regional Coordinators
 - o Africa - Abba Mahdi
 - o Asia-Pacific - Dr. Narudee Kiengsiri
 - o Europe - Giuseppina Bombaci
 - o Latin America - Diana Barragán
 - o North America and the Caribbean - Dawne Williams
- Report of the Resolutions Chair - Vicky Mee
- Internal Resolutions
 - o 2020-14: Cessation of Annual Increase in Membership Dues
 - o 2020-19: Increase Dues 1 Euro per Triennium
- Speech of Candidates for International President
 - o Dr. Catherine Bosshart
 - o Hellen Swales

The International President continued by acknowledging that there had been some technical challenges during the previous sessions and the team was addressing them, along with the various emails received from delegates.

Report by the Regional Coordinator - Africa

Referring to her presentation, the Regional Coordinator regretted the lack of face-to-face meetings during the pandemic which had prevented international travel and had left a negative impact on economic, social and cultural life. Indeed, some members in the region had sadly passed away. Women across Africa were suffering greatly as a result of Covid-19 but the International President and members in BPW Africa had been working hard to assist women throughout the region. She thanked everyone for their great efforts and urged everyone to focus their efforts on the women at the grass roots, especially those in rural areas. BPW should work hard to help them obtain the resources they needed to empower them.

There were 4 Federations in Africa and she hoped more would be established. Out of the 27 clubs, 7 had been founded during this triennium but many more were needed across the continent. Ms Samia Salohi Hassan was a role model to everyone in Africa, having just become President of Tanzania. The Regional Coordinator urged members to work hard to achieve the goals of BPW International for women, using the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> and helping those affected by natural disasters or living in conflict

areas. In moving her report, she encouraged members to campaign to eradicate harmful practices and looked forward to supporting her successor as Regional Coordinator - Africa.

The report was seconded by the Regional Coordinator - Latin America.

The Executive Secretary asked for the Regional Coordinator - North America and the Caribbean to be given access to the meeting.

Discussion

BPW Tanzania congratulated the Regional Coordinator and offered a slight correction to the name of the President of Tanzania: Samia Suluhu Hassan.

The International President expressed her condolences on the recent death of the previous President of Tanzania and congratulated Tanzania for electing the country's first female President.

Report by Regional Coordinator – BPW Asia Pacific, Dr. Narudee Kiengsiri

This report covered the period until March 2021. The region had been divided into five sub-regions:

Sub region	Coordinator	Federations	Affiliate Clubs
Oceania	Carolyn Savage, BPW New Zealand	Australia, New Zealand,	American Samoa, Papua New Guinea
ASEAN	Chularat Israngkool Na Ayutthaya, BPW Thailand	Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand	Philippines
East Asia	Catherina Hyun Park, BPW Korea	Japan, Korea, Taiwan	Hong Kong
South Asia	Nasreen Mahdi, BPW Pakistan	Nepal and Pakistan	India
West Asia	HRH Sheikha Hissah Saad Al Abdallah Al - Sabah, BPW Kuwait	Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon	UAE and Yemen

Membership Growth 2017-2021

New Affiliate Clubs

1. BPW Damansara, Malaysia
2. BPW Rizal, Philippines
3. BPW Dipoloc, Philippines
4. BPW Mumbai, India
5. BPW Kolkata, India
6. BPW Abu Dhabi, UAE
7. BPW Kuching Central Chapter, Malaysia
8. BPW Bangsa, Malaysia
9. BPW Phutrajaya, Malaysia

Pending new Affiliate Clubs

- UAE
- Qatar
- India: Nagaland
- Pakistan: Kashmir
- Indonesia: Jakarta
- Laos: Vientian, Savannakhet, Laung Prapang

Progress April 2019 – March 2021

Two new Federations had been founded: BPW Lebanon and BPW Malaysia.

The Federation with the highest membership growth was Taiwan, having increased the membership by 43% in this triennium.

The Regional Coordinator – Asia Pacific had visited and met some potential new Affiliates or new Federations in Indonesia, Philippines and Laos. Membership retention was very important, especially in this pandemic era, so the region actively encouraged clubs to pay their financial dues. In September 2019 there were unpaid dues of €37,885 but after following them up they managed to recover €20,661 (71% of outstanding dues).

With regard to abrogations, where payment had been overdue for several years they had abrogated Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, one club in the Philippines, two clubs in Mongolia and two clubs in India.

The Asia Pacific Regional Conference had been held in Bangkok Thailand in 2018. She encouraged members to consult the website, illustrating the region's activities and the coordinators visits to Indonesia, Kuala Lumpur and Philippines.

She also mentioned the Global Summit of Women and the Women's Economic Empowerment event among others in Taiwan and the region's support for the flood victims in Thailand. The sub regional conference had been held in Japan, as had the second Young BPW symposium, while a fashion show had been held in Nepal.

The next Asia Pacific Regional Conference would be held in Bahrain.

The Regional Coordinator – Asia Pacific moved her report and it was seconded by the Second Vice President – UN and the Executive Finance Officer.

The Second Vice President - UN Dr. Catherine Bosshart congratulated the Regional Coordinator for the great success she had had across the Asia Pacific region.

Report of the Regional Coordinator – Europe

The Regional Coordinator was pleased to describe the activities of BPW Europe, the biggest region of Business and Professional Women around the world. She expressed her thanks to all European presidents and members of the BPW Europe Coordination Committee, has nothing could happen without their constant commitment.

The triennium had begun with the interesting and rewarding news from the European Parliament that together with the European Commission, the Council had adopted the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#). This important document concerned several matters of interest to BPW, such as gender equality, equal opportunities, work/life balance and child care. This document had inspired the actions of the region.

Another important result had been the inclusion of BPW Europe in the Digital Skills and Job Coalition [Digital Skills and Job Coalition](#), a platform created by the European Union to reduce the digital skills gap. In March 2019 as Regional Coordinator she had signed a memorandum with the European Parliament to encourage BPW members to vote in the European elections. In this context of good relationships with the European Institutions, at her request, the Regional Coordinator had secured a permanent contact person at the European Institute for Gender Equality.

An invitation had been received from the Cabinet of the European Commission President to report on the BPW Equal Pay Day Campaign. Equal pay for equal work in the context of gender equality remained a most important topic, with constant annual monitoring and a strong

campaign in all BPW European countries. For this reason, “Equal Pay for equal work” was considered a major success by BPW Europe, given that a new law on this was entering into force in Iceland - the first country in the world to seriously apply equal pay for equal work.

Another success was the campaign on the [Charter of girls rights](#). In Italy, over 900 municipalities, 11 regions and 3 universities adopted this Charter. She hoped to bring the Charter of Girls’ Rights to other countries, involving the Presidents of Federations and clubs. BPW Cyprus, BPW Switzerland and BPW Malta were very active on this issue. Malta celebrated the International Day Child with a Zoom meeting attended by over 100 members around the world.

Also active were [Danube-net](#) the network for business women in towns within the Danube Region and [Adrionnet](#) the network for business women from the countries of the Adriatic and Ionian sea.

Every year BPW Cyprus organized the Mediterranean Symposium. The aim of the Symposium was to recognize women entrepreneurs.

New BPW clubs had been established in Tbilisi in Georgia, Panevėžys in Lithuania, Yerevan in Armenia and Vilnius chamber in Lithuania. There was a new club in Turkey: Maiden’s Tower. Also, 2 individual members had joined in Slovenia and one individual member in Denmark. Potential new clubs were being established in Gaziantep in Turkey and Karaganda in the European part of Kazakhstan. She referred the meeting to the new website of BPW Europe. A key moment for her had been recognition of BPW Europe by the United Nations. In conclusion, she agreed with the First Vice President – Membership that BPW was a great reality, allowing ordinary women to do extraordinary things. She thanked everyone for their support and apologized that she had not been able to complete her presentation in the time given. She moved her report.

BPW UK seconded the report.

The Regional Coordinator - Latin America congratulated her for the report.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich also congratulated the Regional Coordinator – Europe for uniting all the members in the region but commented that it seemed unfair to limit the members of the Executive Board in their reporting time at this meeting, especially since they had given three years’ service almost free of charge. She asked the Timekeeper to treat everyone equally throughout the General Assemblies and to allow the Executive to report their work in more detail.

Point of order

The Chief Parliamentarian reassured the Past International President that all speakers were being given the same time as in previous Congresses, and their achievements were definitely acknowledged but it was important to comply with the time schedule and with BPW regulations and constitutional processes.

BPW Ireland thanked the Regional Coordinator for her report and also for her constant support. She had helped enormously in the organization of the very successful European conference in Galway, Ireland held in 2019.

Past International President Liz Benham also commended the Regional Coordinator, adding that she had always been an inspiration in Europe, including when she had been President of BPW Italy. She was inclusive and kind, and had certainly shown what could be done with hard work. Europe was a model for the whole organization.

Report by the Regional Coordinator – Latin America

The Regional Coordinator began by apologizing for the unintentional omission of BPW Brazil from her report and asked for this to be amended. She described how her six-year-old granddaughter had watched her on Zoom meetings with BPW members. Having completed three university degrees the Regional Coordinator currently practiced law, while serving as an Honorary Member of various organizations and on the Advisory Board of the [Global Chamber of Business Leaders](#). She had been a member of BPW International since 1991, when she joined BPW Geneva in Switzerland. Since then she had been President of BPW Quito twice, BPW Ecuador once, and Chair of the Standing Committee on Legislation and a Member of the Constitutional Advisory Committee. At Cairo Congress she had been ratified by the General Assembly as Regional Coordinator and had been honored to serve the region with the valued support of her team.

Potential new affiliates: Santiago de Chile, Valparaiso and Bogotá Colombia.

She described her plan to institutionalize the region following her initial assessment and then reinstating systems such as regular meetings with the Affiliates and follow ups. She had enjoyed visiting Affiliates such as Tacna Brazil and Argentina and had also attended the Regional conferences of North America, Asia Pacific and Europe.

The Latin American regional conference had been held in Quito with the help of BPW Ecuador. 37 Skype meetings had been held with members as well as candle lighting ceremonies and a webinar organized by our sub regional coordinator Eunice Cruz. She had greatly appreciated the work throughout the region by the members especially in the large Federation of Brazil, where they were running a number of projects. She moved her report

It was seconded by the Executive Secretary.

BPW Spain also wanted to second the Regional Coordinator's report and commended the region for the excellent regional conference in Quito

Past International President Liz Benham also congratulated the Regional Coordinator - Latin America for the very successful regional conference in Quito.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich congratulated the Regional Coordinator for making such a difference in the region. Having served herself as Regional Coordinator there, she understood the challenges across the region, but RC Diana had worked hard to ensure BPW International's governance had been respected while showing great strength as a leader in the region and demonstrating great kindness in her interactions with the members.

BPW Australia asked for the screens not to be shared so the speakers remained visible.

The First Vice President – Membership conveyed her sincere congratulations to all the Regional Coordinators because without their tireless work, the membership would not be as it was now.

Point of information

BPW USA commented that the Regional Coordinator – North America and the Caribbean was unable to access the meeting and the Regional Secretary, who was an Alternate, had been put into the Observers Room in error. The technical team intervened.

BPW Ecuador expressed concern that on page 42 of the Workbook received by email, in the introduction by the Regional Coordinator – Latin America the names of the attendees from BPW Ecuador had not been mentioned, nor were they in the presentations shown today. Since the President of BPW Ecuador had been elected in 2019, she had not been invited to any regional meetings. This constituted a clear breach of the constitution since Ecuador was an active Federation, fulfilling all obligations and duties. She felt that the Regional Coordinator had not shown due respect by omitting BPW Ecuador from the invitations and she had demonstrated an unacceptable attitude towards the Federation and asked for the regional coordinator to rectify the situation.

Point of order

The Chief Parliamentarian asked BPW Ecuador to comply with the regulations and Standing Orders of debate by asking questions at the appropriate time.

Point of information

The Executive Secretary said that one of her duties had been to look at all the official documents within BPW International. The first Vice President – Membership had listed all the federations which had been abrogated and the executive Secretary had sent out the abrogation letters under her direction. She had also sent a warning letter to BPW Ecuador telling them that since The International President had informed her and the first Vice President – Membership that they only had 37 members, they had been notified that according to the BPW Regulations constitution the federation would be suspended and the three clubs would act as Affiliate clubs until they once again had the requisite 100 members to form a Federation. So in Ecuador they were acting as three individual clubs.

The International President stated that as had been discussed the day before, BPW Ecuador had paid for 100 members so they were full members.

BPW Mexico was in agreement with The Chief Parliamentarian in that these were regional matters and should not be discussed in this forum. The situation with BPW Ecuador had been addressed previously within the Latin America region.

BPW Argentina asked to comment. She thanked the team who had organized this meeting so meticulously. They had to make the appropriate decisions in a timely manner at the regional and international level and in the true philosophy of BPW, members had to respect each other and to tolerate potential errors or omissions.

Point of order

BPW New Zealand pointed out that these discussions were not appropriate as the reports were simply to be heard and not contested. She recommended everyone in the audience be muted.

Report by the Regional Coordinator - North America and The Caribbean (Page 44-46 in Workbook)

A hundred years on, the legacy of BPW International's Founder, Dr. Lena Madesin Philips lived on and the region had celebrated this in 2020 on a cruise.

There were now 11 countries within the North American and Caribbean (up from 10 in the previous triennium), including 2 federations the USA and Canada. The rest were Affiliate clubs. There were 3 others pending, but their admission process had been interrupted by COVID-19.

During the triennium the region had worked towards the objective "Empowering women to realize the sustainable development goals" against a background of regional inclusion, respecting and valuing diversity, and reaching deep into the communities. This had ensured that each club continued.

There were regional committee meetings every quarter, with a standard Agenda to keep in focus their main objectives and priorities. A number of regional activities had taken place, as listed in her report on pages 44-46 in the Work book.

Despite having experienced some issues regarding transparency and openness at the Executive Board level, the Regional Coordinator concluded by saying that the triennium had been a regional success story, but she recommended having sharper and better governance documents to support honesty, integrity, transparency and a transformational leadership at the helm. She moved her report and it was seconded by BPW USA.

BPW USA mentioned her work as Immediate Past President of BPW USA, where she had a wonderful leader, providing great guidance and making the work a pleasant experience.

Past International President Liz Benham also congratulated the Regional Coordinator – North America and the Caribbean, especially for raising awareness about BPW International's 100-year anniversary event which had been attended by several members of the Executive Board. Her leadership of the USA federation and the North America region had been being inclusive, transparent, and informative. Sadly, information had not been so forthcoming from BPW International.

Another delegate of BPW USA also expressed appreciation, adding that the Regional Coordinator had been an inclusive visionary, really helping those clubs which were experiencing difficulties for example in the aftermath of the various hurricanes across the region.

Having worked as Regional Coordinator, the Executive Secretary also acknowledged the work by her successor especially considering how busy her career was at this stage. She had been honest concerning finances for BPW International and had been a great leader.

The First Vice President – Membership also added her congratulations for a wonderful report and thanked her for her support on the Executive board.

The Regional Coordinator – Latin America agreed that Dawne had been a marvelous colleague on the Executive and she had witnessed her work across the region.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich recognized RC Dawn's work at regional level but also expressed her deep gratitude for her intervention in the Cairo Congress finances. She had been appointed by the Executive to follow the case and commended her high level of honesty, transparency, and the leadership that she always showed for all the Executive especially in this delicate case. This had made a considerable difference.

Point of clarification

BPW Australia asked whether her BPW report would be presented during this session.

The International President replied that it was not scheduled for that day's session.

In advance of the session considering the internal Resolutions, the International President asked for the technical team to explain the voting process.

Voting Process

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan had been asked to do this by the technical team and showed a PowerPoint presentation. She explained that during face-to-face congresses when debating, delegates formed two physical queues one for and one against the successive Resolutions. As this was not possible virtually, the IT team would take a screen capture of everyone with their hands raised speak. The platform had been set up by SoldOutt who were the IT team and they would see the hands raised sequentially once the chair invited everyone to raise their hands to speak for and then against a Resolution. There would be a time limit of 30 minutes

for each debate. So that would work out at about 6 speakers in favor and 6 speakers against. The list drawn from the screen capture would be given to the Chair who would invite alternating sides to speak, in compliance with the Standing Orders. Delegations could only speak once and priority would be given to anyone who had not spoken previously.

The International President asked for the meeting's understanding while this new debating system was implemented for the first time.

BPW Mexico pointed out that delegates may not initially feel the need to comment but when they heard an intervention which required their input, this system might not identify them quickly enough.

The International President replied that it would depend on the timing and the number of people speaking for or against a Resolution.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan thanked BPW Mexico for raising the issue. She reassured her that after the initial queue if there was time and there were people who wanted to speak, it would be fair to invite further comment. This process was still experimental but hopefully would work.

The Chief Parliamentarian clarified the process. People would speak for then against until the cut-off period, followed by the mover's right of reply. Nobody could speak twice to the motion on the table. However, there had been some confusion with regard to the Standing Orders and Emergency Resolutions. Due to the General Assembly being online some sections of the Standing Orders were to be moved or suspended to reflect the timeframes and the restrictions of the online procedures. It was very important to adhere to the time limits and she would assist the Timekeeper in enforcing this.

BPW Canada was concerned that the normal process could not take place in a virtual forum, as the "screen capture" system would make it difficult to respond spontaneously to arguments during the debate. As Past International President Dr. Nok Viravan had said, after the initial speakers had addressed the meeting it would be vital for the technical team to see if there were other hands raised to contribute more ideas to the debate.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich requested that the "handraising" tool integrated in Zoom be brought on line to enable subsequent speakers to intervene.

The International President said that the handraising system was already working.

BPW Italy commented that it was not working consistently.

BPW Spain asked for the voting function on Zoom to be activated, as it was quick and simple to use.

The Chief Parliamentarian supported this suggestion and explained the functionality of voting on Zoom.

BPW Lebanon added further comments in agreement.

Report of the Resolutions Chair

The request to submit Resolutions for this Congress had been circulated in December 2019 with a deadline to respond by February 20, 2020. She had been appointed as the Resolutions Chair on March 13, creating a very tight timescale to review all the Resolutions so it had not been possible to assemble a Resolutions Committee with proper process. Instead, the Resolutions chair had

worked on her own supported by the Executive Secretary and International President both in ex-officio capacities. She was also grateful to have received ongoing advice from Past International President Sylvia Perry.

Twenty-one Resolutions had been received by the deadline. Three had been withdrawn during the review process and of the 18 which were verified and accepted, 10 were categorized as external and 8 as internal to BPW. These Resolutions were then posted on the BPW Congress website in mid-May 2020. Subsequently, another internal Resolution 2020/19 was added as an addendum after being verified as valid, because it had arrived within the timeframes but technical problems had meant that the Resolutions chair did not receive it before early May.

Time constraints had led the International Planning Committee to decide that this General Assembly would only deal with the core business of the elections reports and budgets which meant that only 3 Internal Resolutions would be presented and debated: 2020/14, 2020/19 and 2020/16. The 10 External Resolutions would be presented but not debated.

She regretted that so many Internal Resolutions would not be considered, as debating how to change the way the organization worked would enable it to function optimally. This represented a loss to our organization in 2021 but she knew many organizations faced similar difficulties as they worked through the limitations and constraints of virtual meetings.

External Resolutions were the foundations of BPW's advocacy work and provided direction. They would not be debated but the meeting would hear the proposers and the seconders, refreshing members' passion for advocacy and the work done for women and girls. By voting the meeting would decide if these Resolutions would become ongoing international advocacy policy.

She recommended to the incoming Executive that the next Resolutions Committee Chairperson be selected and formally appointed within three months of the triennium, as per paragraph 8.5.1 of the Procedure Manual.

She thanked all the members who put time, effort and passion into researching, writing and contributing to these Resolutions because their dedication to the leadership work of BPW International was greatly appreciated that it enabled the organization to move forward. She moved her report.

This was seconded by the Regional Coordinator – Latin America.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich had already submitted a Point of order about the Agenda as she felt that the Agenda should have been prepared by the Executive but they had not been involved at all, despite the meeting being convened to talk about the core business of BPW International. The governance documents clearly stated that the General Assembly was the place to discuss the amendments to the BPW International constitution and regulations so it was unacceptable to have allocated four hours for an awards ceremony and party which were not related to governance. Members had waited many months to hold this General Assembly and her Point of order had asked that those four hours should be dedicated to the business of the General assembly instead of a party which could be held at any time. The constitution was clear that any reforms to the governance documents had to be discussed during the General assembly only.

In reply, the International President said that all Affiliates had indeed asked the General assembly sessions to focus on the core business, the budget, the elections and the reports. The candle lighting ceremony was a tradition outside the eight Business sessions. She did not consider the candle lighting ceremony to be a waste of time as it had been started by the founder Dr. Lena Madesin Philips.

The Chief Parliamentarian asked if the agenda had been voted and accepted by the members and if so she requested the voting numbers

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan confirmed that Agenda was being voted on at that moment. The 8 business sessions had been scheduled but SoldOutt had offered to run an extra session for the awards ceremony free of charge, so this did not replace any business sessions but was merely a complimentary event.

The International President added that even though SoldOutt had offered a special event, the Candle Lighting Ceremony would be an ordinary Zoom session. As the Standing Orders had been adopted and people who had taken the floor could not speak twice, she invited the Chair of the Resolutions Committee to assume the Chair.

Internal Resolutions Session

There were 2 Resolutions to consider, which would affect the Budget. They were shown on pages 138 and 145 of the Workbook along with the Rationale and the Implementation.

The vote would determine how dues were calculated and there were three options to consider: the two Resolutions going forward or voting against them in order to preserve the status quo.

Resolution 2020/14

The Regional Coordinator – Europe explained that the European Presidents at their meeting in Galway had approved the Resolution presented by BPW Italy, Spain and Switzerland about the annual increase of international fees and entrusted her as a member of the executive board to present this Resolution, to stop the increase of one euro per year with effect from the current year 2020/21.

At the BPW International Congress in Helsinki in 2011 it had been agreed to increase the BPW International fees by one euro per year. This was a reasonable decision at the time, considering that the international membership fees had not increased for 10 years but now it was time to stop this annual increase. Many clubs and federations were now in economic crisis and it was impossible for them to pay the international fees so it would be unfortunate to have to close some clubs because they were unable to pay. Federations and clubs would be able to spend this money organizing projects and activities. Therefore, at the request of BPW Europe members, she moved that the annual increase of one euro in the international membership fees should be stopped with effect from 2021.

In January 2020, Member Services had indicated the total number of BPW members was 24,469. Consequently, the financial impact would be €24,469 per year.

The Resolution had been officially seconded by BPW Spain. In seconding the Resolution, BPW Spain recommended that the annual increase of one euro in the membership dues should be ceased. Now more than ever, the world was suffering from a recession due to the pandemic. BPW had to spend its resources helping affiliates to work through this difficult period with training and networking because women empowered women and now was the time to help each other. These resources should be allocated to the digitalization of affiliates to improve their position and visibility. Improved connectivity in the most remote areas would also improve BPW International's connections. These savings would help the organization both locally and internationally to improve its alliances, build sisterhood and therefore attract new members.

The Chief Parliamentarian reminded everybody that when they were seconding a motion, they had to explicitly say they seconded the motion before starting their commentary.

BPW Spain stated they were seconding the motion.

The Resolutions chair invited those who wish to speak to raise their hands and verified with the technical team that the screenshot had been duly captured. She added that normally at this point in the debate, delegations would be conferring on their stance so she encouraged this to happen by WhatsApp privately within the federations.

The Chief Parliamentarian in the meantime queried an email invitation which had been circulated for a meeting at 10 o'clock New Zealand time. There was some confusion about the timing of this meeting. Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan clarified the situation.

Discussion

Past International President Liz Benham spoke in favor of this Resolution and offered to provide some background. For years, it has been very difficult to get an increase of dues in BPW International and for those years, many Past International Presidents worked on very small budgets and were unable to achieve everything they had hoped. The proposal for the dues increase had been put forward during her mandate and was unanimously agreed because it meant greater efficiency to put in more systems, more processes and more services for the members. Having continued for many years it was now necessary to re-evaluate the services within BPW International. From the Affiliates point of view, some Affiliates were paying more to International than they were receiving buyer their own Affiliates' or federations' dues, which were needed to increase the services for the members locally and nationally. So unfortunately she felt there had been no increase in the services and no value. If it was decided to stop this annual increase, the budget would be unchanged as mentioned by the Regional Coordinator – Europe.

In speaking against the Resolution, BPW Singapore cited research indicating that the average inflation rate over the past decade in the euro zone had been approximately 2.5% and although the increment could be smaller, she did not agree to freeze the dues increase. Otherwise, the organization would run the risk in years to come that another difficult economic situation would mean that dues were insufficient to maintain the activities currently being enjoyed. Therefore, BPW Singapore wanted to see a decrease in the increment of dues and would vote against the total cessation of incremented dues at this time.

Friendly Amendment

BPW Canada supported this Resolution because of the challenging economic situation and the necessarily virtual interactions, clubs were finding it difficult to retain members and arrange fundraising activities to support their work. She had calculated that fees had increased by 200% over the last number of years so felt that any increase should be suspended. She also added a proposed Friendly Amendment that the word 'ceased' be changed to 'suspended'.

The Resolutions Chair asked whether this Friendly Amendment had been accepted by the proposer of the Resolution, the Regional Coordinator – Europe. BPW Canada sought her acceptance and it was given. She then asked if the Seconder, BPW Spain, also accepted this friendly amendment.

BPW Spain replied that as this Resolution had been approved during the regional conference and accepted unanimously by all the members she could not accept it.

Therefore, the Resolution was left in its original wording.

Another member of BPW Singapore spoke against the Resolution because she felt that the increase was very reasonable in view of inflation and would bring benefits from BPW International to the various countries and Affiliates.

BPW Italy spoke in favor of the Resolution because the increase represented a lot of money in these difficult times of COVID-19.

As nobody else wished to speak against the Resolution, the Resolutions Chair invited the Proposer, the Regional Coordinator – Europe to accept her right of reply.

The Regional Coordinator – Europe reiterated that the world was passing through an economic crisis, particularly in eastern Europe. So she urged the meeting to stop the annual increase of International fees at this point in time. This decision could always be revisited in the future.

This concluded the discussion on internal Resolution 2020 – 14, which would then go to the web-based platform for voting.

Internal Resolution 2020 – 19

“Membership dues increase and triennial cost of living adjustment”.

BPW Arad endorsed the need to increase the dues to maintain the professional and business credentials of the organization. As Business and Professional Women it was necessary to acknowledge that costs had inevitably increased over the previous triennium and would continue to increase. Current international dues of €22.50 covered basic operational costs but did not permit BPW International to meet the needs and expectations of its members. Without a dues increase, BPW International would be unable to provide the opportunities that members are expected of an international organization. It would not be possible to continue to provide current services, maintain the website or extend the visibility and relevance of BPW International on the existing budget.

She proposed that in the next triennium standard membership dues would increase by one euro to €23.50 while low income countries would pay €11.75. Not increasing dues could create a deficit between income and expenditure in the future. This would not be acceptable in the corporate world and should not be acceptable in an organization of business and professional women.

The delegate from BPW Egypt was unable to login so having checked with the Chief Parliamentarian, the International President, speaking from the floor, seconded the Resolution. She added that any complete cessation in the increase in annual fees would not be sustainable. So she seconded the Resolution that the increase be restricted to one euro per triennium.

Point of order

BPW Spain indicated that this point was not in the internal Resolutions from 2020 and questioned why it had been accepted subsequently.

The Resolutions Chair explained that the Resolution had been received correctly at the President’s Office but had been lost in the spam folder so she had forwarded it to be added as an addendum to the Resolutions reports. But it had not been included for which she apologized.

BPW Spain was of the opinion that a year was sufficient time for the President’s Office to re-publish the Resolution on the website but this had not happened so it should therefore be removed from consideration.

The Resolutions Chair conferred with the Chief Parliamentarian on the best process to follow.

The Chief Parliamentarian noted that under BPW International rules and regulations anything to do with finance had to be presented at least four months prior to Congress. In this case, the

Resolution had been received and formally recognized. So the option would be for the members to say if they were prepared to review and accept it or defer it to be tabled in the General Assembly. But the movers and seconders had complied with due process and the Resolution had been received on time.

Having conferred again with the Chief Parliamentarian, the Resolutions Chair asked the technical team who were compiling the batch voting to put a vote to the Delegates as to whether this Resolution should be accepted or not. If the vote was in favor, the debate would be continued later in the General Assembly.

Point of clarification

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich wondered whether as the Chair of the General Assembly the International President could propose or second a Resolution.

The Chief Parliamentarian explained that the International President had stepped down earlier and the Resolutions Chair was presiding. Therefore, the International President could indeed put a motion or second a motion while speaking from the floor.

Point of clarification

Past International President Liz Benham did not understand how this met the requirements of an advanced notice so she felt it would be more appropriate to withdraw the Resolution and not bring it before the General Assembly. In her opinion, it did not meet the initial requirements of being published even three months before this virtual General Assembly. She seconded the motion by BPW Spain and sought clarification.

The Executive Secretary explained that many members had worked very hard to meet the 20 February deadline for submission of proposed Resolutions. BPW Egypt was seconding this Resolution and the Director of the President's Office was from that federation so should have known what her Federation was presenting, even if the message went into her spam mail. She felt this was no excuse and they did not meet the deadline.

The Resolutions Chair reassured her that the Resolution had definitely been received in time, but the mistake had been that at that date it was not forwarded to the Resolutions Committee. Like so many Resolutions, it had only been seconded in the two weeks leading up to this Congress therefore the Director of the President's Office would not have associated it with her Federation.

Point of clarification

The Chair of the Constitutional Advisory Committee added that she had discussed this in detail with the Resolutions Chair and the President's Office. The date of the email had been carefully checked and it had arrived in due time which is why the Resolutions Chair felt she was able to accept it.

The Resolutions Chair confirmed this and then asked the CAC Chair whether the next stage would be to put it to the vote as to whether the General Assembly would accept it or should it be withdrawn.

The CAC Chair replied that it would not be fair to ask the proposal to withdraw it and she would rather see the General Assembly vote on whether it could be accepted for consideration.

Point of information

The First Vice President – Membership commented that the Resolution was based on the membership fees stabilizing, whereas in actual fact the fees for 2021 had already dropped so it was apparent that this was due to COVID-19.

The Resolutions Chair drew this discussion to a close. It had been decided and confirmed by the Chair of the Constitutional Advisory Committee that it would go to vote and the decision therefore would be with the General Assembly as to whether there was further debate and actual voting on this later in the proceedings. She concluded the session and handed the chair back to the International President.

Point of clarification

Given the time delay, the Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan wondered if the General Assembly voted in favor of internal Resolution 2020 – 14, which would cease the increase in membership dues, would this not obviate the requirement to consider internal Resolution 2020 – 19. Conversely, if Internal Resolution 2020 – 14 failed, at that point the General Assembly could consider 2020 – 19.

The Resolutions Chair repeated what the past International President had said so that the General Assembly understood the proposal whereby if Internal Resolution 2020 – 14 passed then 2020 – 19 would not be required but it would only be further debated if 2020 – 14 failed.

The International President took the chair.

Point of information.

The Executive Secretary wanted to announce that the Nominations Committee included an IT specialist who could organize virtual meetings and as they wanted to have their own meeting, since there were only five members they would not need a special zoom link from the Technical Team.

The International President asked the Executive Secretary to confirm the members of the Nomination Committee.

The Executive Secretary had named them at the previous day's meeting.

The International President pointed out that there was no member representing Latin America so the committee had said they would arrange for a vote.

The Executive Secretary had not received the results but would ensure that this representative was added after being voted in. She was simply announcing that they wanted to organize their own meeting without missing any of the discussions during the General Assembly.

Point of order

BPW Switzerland admitted that the discussions had been very intense and had not revealed BPW at its best. The obvious hostility and offence had saddened BPW Switzerland as they felt that all members should be proud walking in the footsteps of founder Dr. Lena Madesin Phillips and should show this by being respectful to each other. During this virtual conference, delegates would be asked to appoint a new Executive under a new Presidency. These ladies would therefore lead the organization while also representing the values of this well-established movement. Delegates were facing difficult decisions. The previous day, several accusations had been made by and against candidates for election, especially against the Executive Secretary who had not been given a chance to reply. To start elections that night it was essential for the Delegates to have a whole picture and therefore BPW Switzerland urged the International President to give the floor to the Executive Secretary before the voting process began.

The International President thanked her for this Point of order. She agreed that full clarification was needed so she would try to obtain the latest information about Chase Bank in America and would give the Executive Secretary the right of reply once all the information had been received

concerning the Chase Bank account which had been closed and re-opened without official notification.

The Chief Parliamentarian confirmed that she had been discussing this situation with her colleague parliamentarians. She appreciated the concerns of BPW Switzerland adding that it would have been better if she had notified the Parliamentarians beforehand as they would have explained the process that was being put in place. By way of personal comment, she had been sorry to witness the lack of professionalism shown by a number of people that she had held in high esteem. Members must be told exactly what had happened, bearing in mind that no one's character should be defamed in so doing.

She would ask the Executive Secretary to submit the supporting information that had been requested by the International President and that the International President should also submit supporting documentation for the members to review. She wanted to acknowledge the fact that the Executive Secretary should not have been defamed in such a way. The discussion should be held in a professional manner with respect.

In response the Executive Secretary shared a screenshot of the transcript of her conversation with the Executive Finance Officer when the latter had been unable to access the account. She had told the Executive Finance Officer that she had taken the documentation to the BPW Europe regional conference in Galway but the latter had said that she already knew about it so she did not show her paperwork. She did not show her the cheque that was presented to the BPW account as BPW did not have a chequing account. Everything was processed electronically and she did not receive the bank statements. She did not understand what was happening between her transfer authorizations. The cheque had arrived, the bank rang the Executive Secretary to notify her and locked the account. There was apparently a fraudulent cheque involved. She showed the meeting the Chase Bank account when they took the money from the account, as when the bank realized that the cheque was not for BPW they locked the account. This was presumably standard procedure and was a bank transfer action which had nothing to do with the Executive Secretary.

She showed more screenshots from the bank account when the money was paid and read out an official statement from the bank: *"as requested it is to provide the following information, regarding Chase bank account ending 1999 the signatories are Roshan Strange and Yasmin Darwich and the administrator is Bessie Hironimus. The bank account authorized administrator has the duties of a bank account is to ensure that all financial transactions are processed accurately and in time. Accounts administrator's responsibilities include managing obligations to suppliers, customers and third party vendors. Also includes processing bank deposits and reconciling..."*

This demonstrated that the accusations were false. The International President had not presented any evidence. The Executive Secretary would forward to the international executive board the seven pages of emails confirming that she had notified them several times about this but was ignored. This accusation was not only a personal attack on her but it was an insult to the intelligence of anybody who had held a bank account, because if an account was hacked, for the protection of the customer the bank would lock the account.

Before finishing, the Executive Secretary asked for the accusations to be deleted from the records or her rebuttal to be added to the records.

The Chief Parliamentarian responded that the Executive Secretary had had her right of reply, so had done what was asked of her and the conversation would then continue outside the forum.

The International President said that she had not previously seen the cheque just shown by the Executive Secretary, adding that Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich and Past

Executive Finance Officer Roshan Strange were still signatories to a Chase Bank account unrelated to the Cairo Congress but related to BPW International.

She continued that she had been prevented from having access to that account, for which the only signatory was the Executive Secretary Bessie Hironimus, adding that the cheque which the latter had just shown was the one which the International President had mentioned previously in connection with a potential fraud. She declared that this appeared to be a criminal act which had not been notified by the Executive Secretary to either the International President or the Executive Finance Officer so she had only realized what was happening that the account has been blocked when BPW Switzerland and BPW Anguilla sent funds, which were then returned.

The Chief Parliamentarian reminded the International President that the information requested from the Executive Secretary had been provided so therefore the matter would no longer be discussed in this meeting but no doubt the International Board would follow through on the processes.

Speeches by the candidates for International President

The two candidates were invited to speak in alphabetical order according to their surnames.

Dr. Catherine Bosshart, BPW Switzerland & France

In support of her candidacy, the Second Vice President – UN, Dr. Catherine Bosshart showed a video.

Dear BPW most of you know me. I am Catherine Bosshart, I have had the honor of serving you as Vice President for the United Nations during this triennium. My international theme will be: "New actions through cooperation". New actions reflect on three pillars: finances, administration and communication.

Firstly, finances. BPW International needs to invest in a professional sponsoring and fundraising expert to fund further education events, different projects like advocacy, economic as well as educational work and agricultural projects. Our sponsors, "the Friends and Fellows" have to be revived. COVID-19 has told us that we can very well connect virtually. I would therefore shorten the travel budget of the President and invest more in virtual tools.

Secondly, administration. The existing system of administrators has to be consolidated. For the management of our sponsors, "Friends and Fellows", a special administrator has to be added. The Resolution from Cairo Congress to have continuity in the Office of the President has to be implemented.

Thirdly, communication. The new digital tools are a challenge but a great opportunity for our worldwide BPW network. We have to develop the tools which fit our goals. Digital leaders' summits and further education webinars to specify topics will be the tools of our future. As in former times, together with the team I will produce a regular BPW International Newsletter.

With the new Executive I will develop strategies to make BPW more visible and to attract more members. Experience is not a burden but an imperative capital. In business a new CEO can bring and pay his or her closest staff. In voluntary organizations it is vital to know the fields in which one has to work.

It was an enormous challenge to take leadership responsibility during this difficult term nevertheless BPW activities with the UN flourished and prospered. As a President is democratically elected, she has also to be supported, therefore as an Executive Member I had to do a lot of additional tasks. I am ready to lead the International level of BPW to new activities and to a culture of cooperation and mutual respect. Therefore, I invite you all to "New actions through cooperation". Thank you for your attention.

Hellen Swales, BPW New Zealand.

Hellen began by speaking in her indigenous mother tongue, translated as follows: "All peoples of the world, all speakers, all the chiefly peoples here, all groups present welcome, welcome, to you all".

Many of you know me as I've participated in the past two International Congresses and the last as the leader of the New Zealand Federation of Business and Professional Women.

I have attended and contributed to CSW events and parallel events as a speaker since 2015 and participated and chaired the summits in New York. I am also in attendance of the last Asia Pacific Regional Coordinator Conference hosted in Bangkok. I am Hellen Swales and I'm asking and running for the President of BPW International.

BPW International is an organization rich in history, and of empowering women, activism, advocacy and standing for the rights of women. So it is time for us to take the lead again and I pledge a full commitment to working constructively with all our BPW sisters globally, our partners in the UN family and also to building the very best relationships we can with the widest possible range of stakeholders in the development of BPW. To partner with governments and civil society, donors and all other contributors to achieve the best outcomes for women and girls. This demands courage in leadership, a strong voice for advocacy for women and their families and a willingness to act fearlessly to ensure women are treated fairly and equally. I am that voice - we are that voice - as BPW International and our sisters, clubs globally. I also want to communicate more widely with the members and work more closely with the newly-elected Chairs of the Standing Committees to deliver our terms of reference for each of the areas. This work is important as BPW has a diverse voice and we need the experts to be developing and distributing appropriate best practices in their fields of expertise.

Over our history we have achieved much to our credit but our stories need to be revitalized. I want to embrace the work that our young leaders started with their educational videos and You Tubes and empowering them to do more. By this reverse mentoring we will be cementing our pipeline to our future leaders and sustaining the ability of our organization.

As a leader in my own country I sit on many boards and Chair many committees in various fields, and we hold the government contracts to deliver these programs and support them into the community. I chair the women's empowerment principles which is a collaboration of the UN Women's' here in New Zealand. BPW New Zealand, the Human Rights Commission and Zonta District 16. I also Chair the New Zealand Defense Force and Diversity and inclusion Task Force that oversees the implementation of diversity and inclusion programs across the Air Force, the Army and the Navy. I Chair the international Women's Caucus which is an NGO in New Zealand which liaises and works with the Ministry for Women, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Business and Innovation. I sit on many regional committees and boards on climate change, regional growth strategies along with Wellington Regional Transport. I have mentored 230 businesses during COVID-19 and supported their transformation into new entities and re-deployed their offer on virtual platforms.

I am comfortable at negotiating at the table with governments, leaders for better outcomes for women. I am familiar with balance sheets and look to mitigate risks for all the organizations I work for. New Zealand is known for its women leaders dating back to Kate Sheppard who won the vote for women in 1893, some 128 years ago. I am ready to step up to be the next International President for BPW and I'm asking for your support. I want to finish with the proverb in my own language [Maori 2.58.28 2.58.35] the translation is; "Foster the pathway of knowledge to strength, independence and growth for the future generations". I call again for your support.

The International President thanked the two candidates for their presentations and wished them both the best of luck in their bids. She then closed the session.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION 3
Tuesday 23 March 2021 14:00-16:30 hrs. UTC
Chair: Dr. Amany Asfour
BPW International President

Welcoming remarks

The International President welcomed everyone to the third General Assembly session, continuing the first ever virtual general assembly since BPW International had been founded 90 years previously. This was making history for BPW International, and the debates would hopefully have an impact on the daily lives of women and young girls all over the world.

There were 124 participants at the meeting and she looked forward to a constructive session with fruitful debates and reminded everyone to follow the words of the international collect and be kind and constructive, in the spirit of the founder Dr. Lena Madesin Philips.

Announcements would be made by the Elections Chair as well as the nominations chair and the Resolutions chair.

Point of clarification

Young BPW Otoh Hayashi reported that there had again been confusion over the name of the president of BPW Japan.

Report of Elections Chair Judith Van Unen

The Elections Chair was honored to have been appointed to this role again. She continued by acknowledging the members of her Elections Committee and the scrutineers, who were all working well and applying due diligence to their role. As on previous occasions, even though this was not required in BPW governance documents she had decided that someone from every region was appointed to her committee to ensure that the General Assembly could trust their impartiality.

She went on to explain that at the last session on the previous day it had been announced that the voting strength was 166. As always, not everybody would necessarily vote but the BPW rules specified that a vote would be carried by simple majority of “yes” and “no” votes received; abstentions would not count.

Voting results

GA 1 – Adoption of Program

Votes in favor	Votes against	Abstentions	Total votes cast
94	40	0	134

The Program was adopted.

GA 2 - the Report of the International President

Votes in favor	Votes against	Abstentions	Total votes cast
93	36	4	133

The Report of the International President was adopted.

GA 3 – Report of the First Vice President – Membership

Votes in favor	Votes against	Abstentions	Total votes cast
127	5	1	133

The Report of the First Vice President – Membership was adopted.

GA 4 – Report of the Second Vice President – United Nations

Votes in favor	Votes against	Abstentions	Total votes cast
94	35	2	131

The Report of the Second Vice President – United Nations was adopted.

GA 5 – Report of the Executive Secretary

Votes in favor	Votes against	Abstentions	Total votes cast
76	48	7	131

The Report of the Executive Secretary was adopted

GA 6 – Report of the Executive Finance Officer

Votes in favor	Votes against	Abstentions	Total votes cast
73	56	3	132

The Report of the Executive Finance Officer was adopted.

The Elections Chair continued by pointing out that any attempts to influence the voting for a candidate would lead tautomatic suspension of that person from the list of candidates. She asked for all advertisements and promotions to cease.

Secondly, she had been asked to intervene as a federation had asked their members to send their votes to another person in the federation. This was totally inappropriate behavior. Since the 2002 Congress in Melbourne, electronic voting had ensured that votes were secret and no member should be obligated to show their vote to anyone else. She had forwarded this request to the Constitutional Advisory Committee and Parliamentarians to decide how to respond.

Point of clarification

Past International President Liz Benham wondered why if the voting strength had been 166 only 133 at most had voted in each case. She was concerned that they had experienced problems with the voting system.

The Elections Chair reassured her that it was the prerogative of every member to decide whether or not they wished to vote. During the vote verification process, it was ensured that there was representation from every section of the organization. However, delegates simply chose not to vote on some occasions.

BPW Argentina asked where the voting results were to be published.

The Elections Chair proposed that the PowerPoint presentation being shown during this meeting should be converted to a pdf document for circulation to all Delegates or the whole General Assembly from the President's Office.

Point of order

BPW Japan asked why BPW Ecuador had been allocated 3 votes as a Federation when they had only 36 members. This equated to an Affiliate Club and should have one vote only according to the BPW Procedure Manual. She felt it was imperative to ensure votes were properly allocated.

The International President responded that BPW Ecuador had 100 fully paid members, so was entitled to the 3 votes of a federation.

BPW Australia asked for clarification of the membership of BPW Ecuador because they seemed to have declared 36 members. Paying membership for 100 members when they had declared a membership lower than that seemed to be procedurally unfair and effectively buying votes for General Assembly. She requested a ruling from the Parliamentarian and the Elections Chair.

The Parliamentarian asked to refer the question to the Credentials Advisor and Elections Chair because it appeared to conflict with due process.

The Elections Chair agreed in her capacity but it was the Credentials Committee who were allowing Ecuador to have the 3 votes within the 166 eligible votes, so the question should be directed to them.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan reminded the meeting that the calculation of the eligible votes was based on 2020 not 2021 dues, as the General Assembly had been postponed.

The International President closed the debate. The Executive Finance Officer had received the correct dues from BPW Ecuador.

Point of clarification

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair raised another point on the Credentials Report which the Credentials Chair had sent out, where BPW Sweden had been wrongly allocated as a Delegate with associate clubs. She asked if this had been resolved.

The International President confirmed that it had been resolved.

The Regional Coordinator – Europe also confirmed that she had written to Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan to clarify that the BPW Sweden was a federation and not a club: they had paid for 100 members.

Also, that BPW Budapest in Hungary had been omitted from the list of clubs.

The International President replied that the credentials form from Budapest had not been received.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich stated that she was on the Advisory Committee in the Latin America region, as per the Regulations. Regarding the BPW Ecuador situation, she suggested the Credentials Committee should meet with the Executive Secretary who had all the files about the case and with the Constitutional Advisory Committee and First Vice President – Membership. The three of them should declare the Federation to be an Affiliate club until they acquired the 100 members needed to be recognized as a Federation. It was BPW Ecuador who had declared in writing that they only had 36 members, so she urged the Credentials Chair to refer to the knowledge on the case.

The International President said that it was not possible to impose this on a federation that already existed and the President of BPW Ecuador was in the meeting and sent an official complaint to the President's Office alleging interference in their internal affairs.

The Parliamentarian invited the Credentials Chair to validate the credentials of the Federations and Affiliates attending this Congress so that the general business could continue.

The Credentials Chair apologized about BPW Sweden, which had mistakenly been classified as an Associate club with 1 vote, which had now been corrected to a Federation with 3 votes. BPW Poland with 3 Delegates as a federation had also been omitted in error but was now reinstated.

BPW Hungary had received the credentials form but their registration fee had not been received, which was why BPW Hungary was not listed among the Delegates.

The International President added that as registration had ended on March 10, those who had not paid their registration fees were unable to join the General Assembly.

The Parliamentarian pointed out that the Credentials List and voting strength had to be shared with the meeting.

BPW Ecuador informed the meeting that the Federation was founded in 1974 and had had full membership of the Latin America Region until 2020, and had submitted full documentation in support of this, despite the allegations to the contrary. BPW Ecuador had full rights to attend the General Assembly and vote in any decision.

The Chief Parliamentarian asked for this discussion to be taken off the floor.

Point of information

The First Vice President – Membership said that an allegation had been made that BPW Ecuador's fees had been paid from another source after hearing that they had declared 37 members. To clarify that, a request had been made to the Executive Finance Officer to confirm the source. The information had not yet been received, but she wanted the Credentials Committee to be aware of this.

The International President thanked all Affiliates who had supported BPW members during the difficult COVID-19 period. She declared the discussion about BPW Ecuador closed to the floor as it had been referred to the Credentials Chair.

Nomination of members of the Nominations Committee

The Executive Secretary explained that the Nominations Committee was formed by representatives from each region:

- Africa – Bertiller Massawe, BPW Tanzania
- Asia Pacific – Ira Sharma Prasai, BPW Nepal
- Europe – Maria José Mainar Puchol, BPW Spain
- Latin America – Yasmin Darwich, BPW Mexico
- North America and the Caribbean – Michelle Husby, BPW USA.

The Committee had met earlier to choose a Chairperson but the result was not yet known.

The International President had seen the results from the vote for the Latin America representative on the Nominations Committee and as a Point of information, BPW Panama was a club and not a Federation so only had one vote, not the two which had been indicated.

The Executive Secretary continued by saying that at the request of the International President, the Latin America region had repeated the call for nominations to be the representative for that region on the Nominations Committee because of the complaint from BPW Ecuador. All the Presidents from Latin America had voted except BPW Ecuador itself, which had abstained, and there had been one vote against.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan asked that even though the Nominations Committee had not met, there should be a call for nominations from the floor for the Regional Coordinator – North America and the Caribbean as this was the only remaining vacant position. If nominations were submitted, the Nominations Committee could then review them.

Point of clarification

Past International President Freda Miriklis asked the Parliamentarians if the members of committees could be voting Delegates.

The Chief Parliamentarian responded that in that case they had to abstain from all voting, in accordance with the Constitution.

Past International President Freda Miriklis had noticed that Immediate Past President Yasmin Darwich was on the Nominations Committee so asked whether or not she was able to be a voting Delegate.

Past International President Sylvia Perry queried the statement by the Chief Parliamentarian and asked for the relevant text to be read out as she believed that only the Chair would lose her vote as a Delegate. She had already liaised with Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich on hearing of her appointment to the Nominations committee to point out that she would lose her vote if she were Chair of this committee.

Point of order

BPW Hong Kong asked for the sequence of hand-raising to be respected and that the IT team should not be able to clear any pending hands as only the Parliamentarian should be able to rule that a debate be ended. She also asked for the Parliamentarian's un-mute button to be controlled by herself so she could interject whenever necessary.

The International President thanked BPW Hong Kong for their input, adding that the Parliamentarian was guiding the meeting to ensure it complied with the Standing Orders which also stipulated that nobody who had already spoken on a topic could speak again on that same topic.

The Chief Parliamentarian agreed and reminded the meeting that the Standing Orders had been issued to everyone. Her role as Chief Parliamentarian was to keep everyone on track with the rules and regulations, with over 100 Delegates on line it was important to let everyone have their voice heard. When the Chair closed a discussion that item was deemed closed.

The Elections Chair read out the point which the Chief Parliamentarian had been searching for in the Constitution and Regulations, under R10.3:

"Elections and appointments must comply with the General Assembly Guidelines as set out in the Procedure Manual.

R10.3 Elections and appointments must comply with the General Assembly guidelines as set out in the Procedure Manual.

- *Parliamentarians, and other positions required for the period of the General Assembly, are nominated by the President and approved by the pre-Congress meeting of the International Board.*
- *Parliamentarians and the Credentials Chair may not vote in any capacity during the General Assembly*
- *The Nominations Chair and the Elections Chair may not vote in elections*
- *The number of votes for each candidate must be reported to the General Assembly."*

The implication from the third bullet point third was that a voting member could be on a committee but could not be a Chair.

The Executive Secretary reported that during the pre-General Assembly Board of Directors Meeting, the North America and Caribbean region had had their regional meeting and made a

nomination for the Nominations Committee. The documents were mailed but due to the different time zones, they had technically missed the deadline for submission of the paperwork. However, the selection had been made by their region and now the election had to be done by the General Assembly.

The International President thanked her but as the papers had not arrived in time it was considered that the election procedure did not happen. The Nominations Committee had rightly said that nominations were being invited from the floor for the vacant position as Regional Coordinator – North America and the Caribbean.

Point of information

BPW USA responded to the suggestion by BPW Hong Kong, pointing out that in Zoom the correct sequence of people raising their hands was automatically shown on the screen.

The International President agreed but added that the President's Office was notifying her if anyone with a raised hand had already spoken on a matter, so that they would not be allowed to speak again, in accordance with Standing Orders. Priority was also given to certain people such as the Parliamentarian and the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair indicated that the established procedure for presenting a nominee from the floor was that the nominating President should actually state the name and submit the papers to the Nominations Committee within two hours. So this would apply for nominees from the floor for North America and the Caribbean.

Reham Adel from the President's Office pointed out that the raising hand option did not appear on everyone's screen. She actively gave the opportunity to speak to people who had not spoken before and she also complied with orders from the Chief Parliamentarian.

Nomination of Regional Coordinator – North America and the Caribbean

BPW St Kitts nominated Dawne Williams for the position of Regional Coordinator – North America and the Caribbean. Dawne had held several positions in BPW, beginning as President of BPW St Kitts 2013 – 2016, where she single-handedly initiated the reinstatement of the club after several years of dormancy. Holding the position of Regional Coordinator from 2017 to 2020 meant that she had been a member of the BPW International Executive in that period, while also being involved in several other voluntary organizations.

The Parliamentarian asked her to simply confirm the nomination at this point.

BPW USA seconded this nomination.

The International President confirmed that the Nominations Committee would make the necessary arrangements for this nomination in anticipation of receiving the documents within the time frame.

Report of the Pilot Taskforce

Past International President Dr. Antoinette Rüegg played a video.

Hello everybody, the Pilot is developing new working tools on the international BPW level. We have good results and found even a new important tool. Let's start with the Member Projects. Clubs and federations have to focus on specific projects but we always have members who would like to work on a special topic, for instance, at an annual meeting of BPW USA a member asked the Executive Committee to establish a taskforce on Ayurveda. Now, with the member projects the Executive can either accept the proposition or say "if you want to work on this topic you can register a member project on international level". You find

all necessary information on the Pilot website <https://www.bpw-international.org/projects/> which means the registration form, the guidelines, and the confirmation forms which have to be signed by the club and federation President.

The control of the member projects by the International Executive Board works very well. After one month the new project Chair gets the answer. If her project is approved by the Executive Board she finds it online and an annual report is requested to keep the project going. All projects are listed along our 12 BPW topics, along the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals and along the countries. A second absolutely vital tool we have found and established only in 2017 it is a collection of the titles of our clubs and federation projects.

Some years ago BPW International planned a professional fundraising it failed because our organization couldn't show enough of its rich performances like the many projects of our federations and clubs. Of course the federations mentioned some projects in their annual reports, but the reports go in the archives and end of the story. Now, in our digital age BPW International has a tool which collects and shows the titles of the projects, of the clubs and federations. That means the clubs and federations are requested to register just the titles of the project online.

A survey of our projects fulfils three vital goals:

First, a survey of BPW performances is basic for any professional fundraising and for sponsors. Second, a database for Executive members is vital they have to submit activity reports which are requested by the different UN agencies like UNESCO, ILO, FAO and other partners. Different partners want to know the performances of BPW in a concrete manner. Thirdly, a survey is also basic for the networking and information activities of all our members.

The Pilot would not have been possible without the website and the support by the digital tools. In 2017, I met the webmaster Ursula Schmid, Past President of BPW Davos and she offered her support for free. A big thank you to Ursula Schmid. Another thank you to the Pilot Administrator Daniela Rigassi: she is an excellent organizer who did much more than requested in her job description. Have a look at her statistics on the website. A final thank you to all the member project Chairs, Co-chairs and members. For instance, Géraldine de Crevat, BPW France with her monthly inter-continental online meetings with prominent speakers. She worked successfully since the start of the Pilot. A thank you also to all the members who have registered as experts which is also a Pilot service and thanks to the Pilot Team members. Finally, a thank you to all the clubs and federations who registered the titles of their projects. You will find all the Pilot information very easily on the BPW Pilot website.

The Parliamentarian reported general concerns about the visibility of hands being raised and explained the Zoom system with its automatic sequencing.

BPW Croatia announced that she had lost the audio feed from the meeting for a while. This was rectified.

Past International President Liz Benham asked whether the Executive had had control of the projects and had seen all the projects that have been submitted, since the €7000 that was allotted was now almost expended.

The Projects Chair referred her to the regional report, which explained the process.

Past International President Freda Miriklis thank the Projects Chair for all her hard work during this triennium, adding that the Taskforce had worked particularly well.

The Projects Chair thanked her and stressed that she had been mindful that many members favored the committee structure, so potentially it would be possible to retain the committees as well as the Pilot structure.

The International President agreed, and added that the taskforces could also work for specific projects.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich thanked the Projects Chair and added that this initiative dated back to 2014, following a Resolution proposed by the Projects Chair herself. She recommended that BPW took more time to see the benefits of the Pilot project.

She pointed out especially to new Affiliates that two books had been published, documenting the history of BPW International and containing reports from the various committees. She had asked the author, Past International President Sylvia Perry to provide the books in electronic format so that all members could access the history of the work of the committees.

Having been on the Executive for a year Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich and her Executive colleagues had not approved any projects, possibly because they were not aware that they were on the standalone website.

She recommended that if the committee structure was voted in, there should be a Projects Committee Chair with this Pilot project under her leadership.

BPW USA asked why the taskforces had been removed in 2014, but the Projects Chair reassured her that no taskforces were removed, and the International President added that it had been the Standing Committees that were suspended.

Another delegate from BPW USA asked what would happen if both Committees and Projects were to continue side by side. She presumed both would fall under the remit of the Projects Chair.

The Projects Chair felt that these were totally different. The aim was to identify tools for the future, to collect and show their achievements in digital format. Perhaps a special taskforce should research innovations.

Point of clarification

Past International President Freda Miriklis BPW Australia corrected the assertion by Past International President that the Pilot Project had started in 2014, when in fact it had been launched during her mandate (2011 – 2014). Therefore, the organization had had 9 years of witnessing the good work of the Projects Taskforce.

The Projects Chair responded that the work had only officially begun following Congress in 2014 after the necessary groundwork. She was grateful to Past International President Freda Miriklis that she had provided the opportunity to test this out.

BPW Spain asked for clarification that the Projects Chair was recommending compilation of reports showing the activities of BPW Clubs in order to raise funds for BPW International. If so, this could be used to secure sponsorship, which would also be very good for the Public Relations Committee.

The Projects Chair agreed that this would be a good example of committees working together.

Past International President Elizabeth Benham reiterated how pleased she was with the projects but wanted clarification on management of the budgetary aspects, which she felt had not been visible. She wondered what would happen with the funding if the committees and taskforces continued.

The Projects Chair said that the dedicated website was built on a purely voluntary basis. It was an example of exploring new possibilities, finding new tools and ideas. She invited everyone to bring ideas for improvement. The process of innovation had really happened, and she herself had been surprised at the evolving outcomes.

The Young BPW Representative expressed concern that not all projects were being publicized, for example, there were 5 Young BPW projects underway. This had led her to withdraw from the initiative because the lack of recognition was a great disappointment to the young members. She also did not remember any projects being brought to the Executive for approval. She recommended that more young members were included on committees so that they would reach out and teach all the members how to register projects. BPW Nepal had 100 projects running but just two projects had been registered.

The Projects Chair appreciated her comments and admitted that it had been surprisingly difficult to obtain details of all the club or federation projects so would welcome input on how to improve this.

The International President closed the discussion and thanked everyone who had contributed.

The Executive Secretary thanked the Projects Chair for her dedication but would have welcomed more reports. She had asked the President's Office to request a report but had not seen one yet. The BPW International Constitution required the organization to have Standing Committees with Chairs so she wondered when the Pilot project would become a committee.

The Projects Chair reminded the meeting that there was a pending Resolution on the subject of the Pilot project. The Executive Secretary wondered about the future of the Chairs of Standing committees but the Parliamentarian pointed out that because there were Resolutions to be considered, any discussions should be continued at the time programmed for that debate.

The Resolutions Chair assumed the chair.

Internal Resolution 2020-16 on page 140 of the Workbook

The Proposer, Past International President Dr. Antoinette Rüegg presented a video and explained that the Pilot Project involved two main tools: The Member Projects and the Collection of the titles of the club and federation projects. Any member wishing to work on a project could register it on the [Pilot & Projects website](#) using the registration form, guidelines and the confirmation forms which had to be signed by the club and federation Presidents. The final confirmation of a member project came from the International Executive Board. All projects were listed on the website according to the 12 BPW topics, 17 UN SDGs, countries and the names of the Project Chairs.

A second important tool was established in 2017: the collection of the titles of the club and federation projects. One planned professional fundraising by BPW International had failed through the lack of detailed reports on successful projects by federations and clubs. The survey of club and federation projects fulfilled three vital goals: 1) it provided the visible basis for professional fundraising and sponsoring, 2) it offered a database for members of the BPW Executive who had to submit activity reports and 3) the membership could use it as a valuable networking and information tool.

The financial impact on BPW International in the following triennium would be €5500 per year.

The proposer expressed her thanks to the projects webmaster Ursula Schmid who had given her time for free and the administrator Daniela Rigassi who had worked much more than requested in her job description. She also thanked everyone who had supported this initiative and were using this important new digital tool.

This was seconded by the Second Vice President – UN Dr. Catherine Bosshart, who stated:

1) the Pilot project showed what BPW federations, clubs and members were doing. This was vital to attract sponsorship and acted as a showcase for the organization. The Pilot Project had been very useful in her preparation of reports to the United Nations - UNESCO and other partners. The

website was very user-friendly. 2) The website showed information according to country and BPW topic. 3) The Pilot website was crucial when UNESCO requested projects to be submitted for sponsoring or special awards. She believed the Pilot should run alongside the Standing Committees as it was an excellent promotional tool for BPW International.

The Resolutions Chair opened the floor to discussion and explained the procedure for delegates to request to speak for or against. There were some initial issues with delegates not being recognized by the IT team as the handraising was not working correctly.

Point of information

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich referred to Resolution 11 as passed at Jeju Congress and asked for the basis on which this Pilot project was approved. Many members were not aware of the rules and the conditions governing that original Resolution.

The Parliamentarian replied that the members should be able to read that information in their Workbook from their previous Congress.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich wondered whether the Pilot project being described differed in concept from Resolution 11 as approved at Jeju Congress. This was a very sensitive issue for the organization and one that would change its structure.

The Resolutions Chair did not have access to Resolution 11 from Jeju Congress in a PowerPoint form.

The Parliamentarian reminded the meeting that it was considering the current Resolution, not the one from Jeju Congress.

The Executive Finance Officer supported this innovative idea to promote BPW, its members and the exchange of ideas and opportunities. BPW represented opportunities for women worldwide and the Pilot project provided a valuable way of giving a voice to women. She greatly appreciated having been a member of the BPW Pilot project.

BPW Spain spoke against the Pilot project because she felt projects were already being run successfully by the Standing Committees, such the sponsorships in the Public Relations Committee. Also, some projects had been authorized without the knowledge of their own Federation Presidents, which contravened the process described by the Proposer and undermined transparency.

Before taking the next speaker, the Parliamentarian reminded the meeting that in complying with the rules of debate, the next speaker should be in favor of the Resolution, as was recorded by the snapshots of the Zoom screens.

Point of order

BPW New Zealand wished to cite the clarification that was brought up around the actual Resolution passed in Jeju. Referring to page 121 of the Proceedings from Jeju Congress under the then Resolutions Chair, Jean Murray (BPW Australia) the "Resolution Internal I – Renewal of the Committees, the Taskforce and the Projects" was proposed by the Past International President Dr. Antoinette Rüegg, seconded by Austria, Finland and Switzerland. The Proceedings stated: *"Past International President Antoinette Rüegg had undergone a review of the committees and had been given ten minutes to make a presentation on her Resolution. The Resolution would be voted on part I – The Structure, II – The Implementation. Past International President Antoinette Rüegg thanked all those who had discussed."* So the outcome was that the Standing Committee would be changed or suspended which was why they had not worked and BPW New Zealand felt it

important for the meeting to understand what actually took place at Jeju Congress in 2014 because it would affect this debate. She suggested the meeting consider that before voting.

The Resolutions Chair wanted to check with the Parliamentarian because BPW New Zealand had not spoken “for” the Resolution so it was unclear whether she could invite the next speaker to address the meeting.

The Parliamentarian responded that this needed to be considered. Everyone should have had the Resolution on which this Resolution was based so conferred with the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair explained that the idea had been to make a decision here once the meeting had had time to consider how both systems worked together or separately. This would enable them to make a decision on whether to retain the proposed new Projects structure, the Standing Committees or both. So she believed it was relevant to have both the Resolution and the amendment and if the Resolution were not laid on the table, the same had to happen for the amendment. She recommended proceeding with the Resolution.

BPW Canada spoke in favor of this Resolution for two reasons. Many BPW Canada members had been encouraged to access the Projects website and she would be integrating some virtual training sessions for members. Secondly, she acknowledged the need for BPW International to submit a regular report for the United Nations to keep the organization’s ECOSOC accreditation, and that report was based on the projects being conducted to advance the status of women. So the Projects initiative was an extremely important way of gathering the key information from all clubs across the world.

BPW Brazil had tried to speak in favor but had not been identified so at this point had to wait for another delegate to speak against.

Point of clarification

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich wanted to clarify whether or not the Resolution was tabled pending the information requested by BPW New Zealand.

The Resolutions Chair replied that she was acting on the advice of the Chair of the Constitutional Advisory Committee who had ruled that this debate should continue without that information. She would close the debate if nobody wished to speak against the Resolution.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich wanted to ensure that everybody was well-informed about how this Resolution had been presented in Jeju because this concept under discussion was totally different. The website was different and the need for a budget was unusual as Standing Committees did not normally have one. The Chair was also apparently in place already, all of which needed consideration as it was not the standard process. She asked the Proposer if she would consider a friendly amendment.

The Resolutions Chair pointed out that there was still a speaker wishing to speak in favor of the Resolution. She agreed that at the voting stage, this Resolution should be accompanied by the previous Resolution from Jeju so that all the information was available to guide the decision-making.

BPW Brazil supported the project taskforce having worked with Dr. Antoinette Rüegg since the beginning. She valued the opportunity for BPW members to publicize their projects. On five or six occasions, the project taskforce had supported BPW International’s UN representatives when they needed to submit reports illustrating what BPW members were doing across the world.

BPW members were proud of having this opportunity to show how hard they were working and she felt this taskforce should exist alongside the Standing Committees.

BPW Italy had wanted to speak in favor of the Resolution but could not, given the absence of a speaker against.

The Resolutions Chair drew the debate to a close, acknowledging that there seemed to be a need for further information about the Resolution that was passed in Jeju and that information should be circulated with the voting batch for everyone to consider before voting

The Parliamentarian pointed out the need to give the Proposer of a Resolution the right of reply. Also, BPW Italy had tried to speak in favor of the Resolution but she reiterated the rules of debate, which required alternating speakers “for”, and “against” a Resolution

The Proposer exercised her right of reply. In response to BPW Spain’s allegation that some Presidents had been by-passed, she denied this had been for Member projects, as she had the confirmation forms signed by the President of the Federations or clubs. This information could be shared, along with the project title and details. She encouraged other Standing Committees to work in a similar way to the Pilot project. BPW International had a history of committees writing papers but today the work had to be done on the ground in order to make progress. Hence the need for the Pilot project, which by its name indicated that it was an exploratory and innovative research tool. She acknowledged the work of the webmaster Ursula Schmid to provide tools for the Committee Chairs, despite being paid only €1500.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair had been unable to speak before the Proposer was given her right of reply, but she had been asked about a potential friendly amendment. Although this had been addressed in the Standing Orders, this would be a difficult situation as the debate had already been closed.

Point of information

The Executive Secretary was concerned about the potential unconstitutional nature of the Resolution as the procedure described differed from that adopted at the Jeju Congress. She also wondered what would happen to the Standing Committees if the Pilot Project were to continue.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair intervened to say that she could not ask that question at this stage.

The Resolutions Chair added that this would be addressed as a separate issue. This Resolution was simply to decide whether or not the Pilot project should continue. She closed the debate and the Resolution would go to the web base for voting unless the Parliamentarian said otherwise and it would be accompanied by the original Resolution from Jeju Congress.

The Parliamentarian confirmed that the Resolution had been tabled and reviewed, and was submitted in accordance with the rules. It had been debated; the right of reply had been exercised, so it was now time to move to the next item. This would continue with the work of the Constitutional Advisory Committee in looking at Amendment 22 and the role of Standing Committees and their Chairs.

The International President resumed the Chair and thanked the Resolutions Chair for the well-structured debate.

Report of the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair, page 66 of the Workbook

Following the Cairo General Assembly, the work of the Constitutional Advisory Committee during this triennium had principally concerned updating the Constitution and Regulations to incorporate the amendments approved at the General Assembly and then ratified at the 74th Post

General Assembly International Board Meeting on October 27, 2017. The updated documents had then been provided to all Affiliates.

The Procedure Manual with the agreed changes made by the 2014-2017 Executive was proposed and accepted at the 73rd pre-General Assembly International Board Meeting on October 23, 2017. The updated document had then been provided to all Affiliates.

Amendments for the Constitution and Regulations and the Procedure Manual for this General Assembly had been received in the President's Office by the closing date of February 20, 2020. The members of the Constitutional Advisory Committee were appointed and conducted a review of the amendments within a tight time schedule by email and regular meetings on Zoom, mostly once a week. On most occasions they had been joined by the ex-officio members International President Dr. Amany Asfour and Executive Secretary Bessie Hironimus. They accepted 25 proposals for amendment to the Constitution and Regulations and 16 proposals for amendments to the Procedure Manual that had met the criteria for submission. These had been distributed to all Affiliates and posted on the BPW International website.

Unfortunately, the global pandemic had prevented BPW International holding the Congress in Orlando in August 2020 and the virtual General Assembly was now taking place in March 2021. Regrettably, they had taken the difficult decision to address only core business in the eight virtual sessions to be held. It was disappointing that only 3 Resolutions and 2 Constitutional changes could be debated.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee's ongoing work was to generally advise on the BPW International governance documents and any issues arising from them. This triennium had been very busy and turbulent, with a range of issues and extremely numerous queries. She believed she had provided confirmations and interpretations without bias. Some of them had not been accepted or had been mis-interpreted if they did not accord with others' interests. The work of the Constitutional Advisory Committee would be concluded after the General Assembly and the post-General Assembly International Board Meeting, when any necessary adjustments to the governance documents would be made for publication and distribution to the new Executive and all Affiliates.

The CAC Chair thanked her team who had contributed many hours of their time and had been very supportive, making excellent suggestions to discussions and the review of the submitted amendments to the Constitution and the Procedure Manual:

- Ojobo Ode Atuluku, BPW Nigeria
- Angelina Gracy Sookoo-Bobb, BPW St Kitts
- Christa Kirchmair, BPW Austria
- Carolyn Savage, BPW New Zealand.

She moved her Report. This was seconded by the Executive Secretary.

Point of information

The Executive Secretary announced that the Nominations Committee could not meet because all five regions had to be represented, yet the Africa representative was unable to join and the Latin America representative, Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich was still in this meeting.

BPW USA thanked the Constitutional Advisory Chair Sylvia Perry for all her hard work during such a challenging time for the organization and for her dedication over the last 50 years.

Constitutional Amendments

Past International President Sylvia Perry assumed the chair in her role as Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair.

Amendment C22: Standing Committees

Title of proposed amendment	Regulations. R15. Standing Committees	
Proposed by	Dr. Antoinette Rüegg, Past International President	
Seconded by		
Supported by		
Financial Impact	The annual contribution of 135 Euro per committee drops	
CURRENT WORDING		PROPOSED WORDING
<p>Regulations. R15. Standing Committees R15.1. The following Standing Committees are formed: Agriculture, Arts and Culture. Business, Trade and Technology, Development, Training and Employment, Environment, Health, Legislation, Membership, Projects, Public Relations, Young BPW , United Nations - Status of Women Each Standing Committee in addition to the Chairperson has between 4 and 6 members.</p> <p>R15.2. Appointment of Standing Committee Chairpersons and members</p> <p>Standing Committee Chairpersons are elected by the General Assembly, except that the First and Second Vice Presidents is the Chairperson of either the Standing Committees on Membership or the United Nations - Status of Women and the Young BPW Representative is the Chairperson of the Young BPW Standing Committee.</p> <p>The members of the Standing Committees are formally appointed by the President. No Standing Committee Chairperson or members can serve for more than 2 consecutive terms in the same capacity.</p> <p>Each Affiliate sends to the Executive Secretary before each Congress a list of its nominees for membership on Standing Committees, accompanied by a statement of the qualifications of each nominee and her consent to act if appointed. The Presidential Office informs Affiliates when its nominees are appointed.</p>		<p>Regulations. R15. Standing Committees R15.1. The following Standing Committees are formed:</p> <p>Membership, United Nations - Status of Women, Young BPW</p> <p>R15.2. Appointment of Standing Committee Chairpersons and Members</p> <p>The Standing Committee Chairpersons, which means the First and Second Vice Presidents is the Chairperson of either the Standing Committees on Membership or the United Nations - Status of Women and the Young BPW Representatives is the Chairperson of the Young BPW Standing Committee.</p> <p>The members of the Standing Committees are formally appointed by the President and the respective Executive Board Member. No Standing Committee member can serve for more than 2 consecutive terms in the same capacity.</p> <p>Each Affiliate sends to the Executive Secretary before Congress a list of its nominees for membership on Standing Committees, accompanied by a statement of the qualifications of each nominee and her consent to act if appointed. The Presidential Office informs Affiliates when its nominees are appointed.</p>
<p>AMENDMENT 22 RATIONALE.</p> <p>Most of the Standing Committees, not chaired by an Executive Board Member, were not able to deliver performances which would empower BPW International notably for the following reasons. Giving focused tasks to the Standing Committees at the beginning of her term was not a priority of a new President. Focus areas emerge after an Executive Board has started its work. — As the needs are very diverse an elected Chair might not be the best expert for a specific task. — Being a Member of a Standing Committee is often frustrating, as the Committee Members normally are on different pages. Having a vote (Committee Chair) or having a position as a Committee Member finally appeared to be</p>		

the main motivators.

In our digital age we have smarter tools which in addition respect the capacities and competences of our members who would like to offer their performance at international level. A PILOT Resolution 2014 – 2020 evaluated and implemented a new tool which members who would like to contribute at

international level are welcome to use. See Resolution "BPW International Member Projects".

The "BPW International Member Projects" together with the "BPW International Taskforces" are able

to work more efficiently as the Standing Committees. They get established when a true task pops up and offer members a smarter way to do work at international level. In addition the "BPW International

Member Projects" offer each member who would like to contribute the opportunity to do so.

For all these reasons the Delegates are requested to abolish the Standing Committees not chaired by Executive Board Members.

As Proposer and as a Standing Committee Chair, Past International President Dr. Antoinette Rüegg shared a video, explaining that she was convinced that the work of the Standing Committees not chaired by Executive Board Members meant disrespecting our members regarding the work they were expected to do. If members primarily wanted to have a position or a vote on what the Standing Committees could provide, this was valid as she had nothing against the 9 votes of the committee Chairs as Delegates but she wished that they were given to BPW members doing very valuable work for BPW. The member project at least gave each member who wanted to use BPW International level for project work and this was an important BPW member service.

Disruption at the International Executive level had meant that sustainable development of BPW had not been discussed during this Triennium but it was discussed at the Pilot project level. The official website of BPW International only published the names of the committee members without equipping them with any digital working tools. As cooperation was the value of the Pilot, the Pilot webmaster would be ready to offer the committees simple digital tools to support their work.

This amendment to the Constitution represented an interesting test to see how many Delegates preferred having positions as motivators and how many preferred having good working conditions as motivators for members. She thanked everyone who was providing important commitment to BPW at club, country and international levels.

The seconder was EFO who confirmed she had signed the requisite form.

The Parliamentarian asked for visibility of those speaking in favor and against the Amendment. The IT team captured screen shots of those speakers. She had understood that Second Vice President – UN had officially seconded this.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee chair requested the list of those in favor and those against.

Point of order

The Executive Secretary asked if the number of Delegates currently in the meeting had changed since the beginning of the session.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee replied that there were currently 169 members on line, and described the difficulties of being required as co-host of the session to chair the meeting while monitoring incoming and outgoing delegate numbers.

The Parliamentarian confirmed there were 178 delegates present initially but over time, some had left so there were currently 169 at the meeting. These sessions were being recorded and would be circulated to anyone who had had to leave before the end.

The Executive Secretary added that any time the quorum changed, the new total had to be announced for the Proceedings. It was unfortunate she had not yet received the Credentials Report, although her role required her to work with all the credentials and this Report had also been requested by the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair and the First Vice President – Membership.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair responded that it would be very difficult to keep taking the credentials.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan commented that this was the very issue that the meeting had been discussing, hence the need for the current Standing Orders because it was impossible to vote during real time as the quorum changed dynamically all the time. Hence the need for a secure web base with online voting. This system ensured the voting strength, would be fixed and the Credentials Chair according to the Standing Orders would have the duty to announce the voting strength immediately before the online voting session began. This number would remain fixed. The electronic roll call which everyone would receive contained the history of people entering and leaving the session.

This was why the Standing Orders needed to be modified for this forum and had been adopted. The Executive Secretary did not agree that this answered her question, pointing out that that was the role of the alternates who took the place of the credentialed delegates when they had to leave the room. This ensured that there was a constant number of people at the meeting.

The Parliamentarian added that the alternates were allocated by the countries and technology was not consistent worldwide, even in New York, as shown by the Past International President's problems with connectivity.

The Chief Timekeeper pointed out that the official time for this session had expired and was overrunning.

The Parliamentarian suggested asking the members if they were prepared to continue for a further 30 minute.

Unable to call for a vote, the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair requested a general consensus to complete this discussion.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair asked the Parliamentarian to confirm who was left waiting to speak.

The Parliamentarian confirmed that the only eligible speaker was BPW Spain, who would be speaking in favor.

BPW Japan was concerned that in her time zone it was now past midnight so very difficult to continue discussions. She asked for the session to be closed.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair appreciated that the timing of this session had been geared towards certain parts of the world.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan suggested continuing for a further ten minutes.

Point of order

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich asserted that the previous Resolution presented called for the Pilot Taskforce to co-exist with the Standing Committees whereas now the meeting was being asked to consider removing the Standing Committees and the next day it would again be discussing maintaining the Standing Committees. This was very confusing for the members. She recommended that voting on the 3 options and especially the financial implications be postponed until full information was available and enough time had been allowed for members in all time zones to consider the proposals.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan answered the Point of order by explaining that when the call for vote went out it would go out with the information requested, there would be more than 24 hours to vote on it. If this call for vote were missed it would mean delaying the vote by three days as the system had been pre-scheduled to begin the voting process.

BPW USA wanted to speak against the amendment.

Point of information

The International President pointed out that the members of the Nominations Committee were waiting for Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich to finish contributing to the debate so that she could take her place on the Nominations Committee. They had been obliged to postpone their meeting as a result.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair presumed that this would delay the Nominations Committee even further for the voting.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan agreed as the voting had been scheduled and the speeches of the candidates introducing themselves was scheduled for the following day. However, the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair interjected that until the Nominations Committee had met and considered all the nominations it would not be appropriate for the candidates to present themselves. Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan suggested that the other candidates could present themselves but no election would be held until the candidate for Regional Coordinator – North America had given her speech.

As Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich had presented a Point of order rather than speaking against the amendment, BPW Spain was invited to speak against the amendment.

BPW Spain spoke against the amendment, as she believed that the amendment was inappropriate for the members of the federation. The members were working in support of BPW International, not to have a Chair on the Executive.

Point of information

The Resolutions Chair commented that when people were referring back to the Resolution, it was the wording of the actual written Resolution which would be voted upon and the fact that in speaking the Proposer suggested that the Standing Committee and the Pilot project could potentially work together, that was just verbal so should be disregarded. The voting for that Resolution was to decide whether or not the Pilot project continued.

Point of order

Since this could remove the Standing Committee Chairs, the Executive Secretary did not agree with the principle of voting on something which conflicted with the BPW International Constitution in which their existence was stipulated. It was not feasible to remove Standing Committee Chairs in order to run the Pilot project without amending the Constitution.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair replied that there had been a Resolution to both fund and establish the Pilot project without separating those two actions. Now the General

Assembly was considering the Pilot project and quite separately to consider the future of the Standing Committees. This had been discussed during the CAC committee's review of the proposed Constitutional Amendments to which the Executive Secretary had been party.

Past International President Dr. Antoinette Rüegg exercised her right of reply. Her main interest was to move the organization forward and always to look for new structures. She asked if it would be possible to withdraw the amendment. This was authorized.

The Proposer and Seconder agreed to withdraw Amendment 22 Regulations R15.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair closed the debate.

The Parliamentarian had received some communications and pointed out that the Nominations Committee could only review nominations received from the floor: they did not discuss or debate the validation of nominations received and published on the website and in the Workbook.

A delegate of BPW USA had received a text from the Nominations Committee saying that they had elected Michelle Husby as their Chair and they would like to meet with the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair following this meeting.

Point of order

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan reminded the International President to ask the Credentials Chair to report the current voting strength.

The Credentials Chair announced the updated Voting Strength:

Executive Board Members	11
Past International Presidents	7
Delegates from 38 federations	121
Delegates from associate clubs	30
Total	169

The International President shared breaking news on violence against women and racial issues in the USA and said that BPW International stood very much with the women of the USA and with all races. BPW International was an inclusive organization, supporting the rights for women from every race, from every religion, from every color and stood in solidarity with sisters around the world.

The International President closed the meeting.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION 4

Wednesday March 24, 2021 14: -00-16:30 UTC

Chair: Dr. Amany Asfour
BPW International President

Opening remarks

International President Dr. Amany Asfour welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Elections Chairperson explained that she had received a number of emails of concern, highlighting many interactions between members and Delegations regarding elections where some candidates had been campaigning or supporters had been campaigning for them or discouraging people to vote for them. This threatened to undermine the strong values in BPW International and she requested that all members refrained from this behavior. If anyone were approached in this way, they were to contact the Constitutional Advisory Committee (CAC) Chairperson or Parliamentarians.

Report by the Nominations Committee Chairperson

As Chairperson of the Nominations Committee, Michelle Husby BPW USA announced the candidates standing for election.

Candidates for Chairpersons of Standing Committees

Agriculture

Cristina Visconti, BPW Italy.

Arts and Culture

Sher Singh, BPW USA.

Business Trade and Technology

Paz Martin Lozano, BPW Dominican Republic.

Christine Walwyn, BPW St Kitts

Development Training and Employment

Francesca Burack, BPW USA.

Nasreen Mahdi, BPW Pakistan

Environment and Sustainable Development

Laurie Dameron, BPW USA.

Angela Donato, BPW Italy

Health

There were no candidates at the time, since Dr. Luisa Monini had been disqualified as a candidate as she had already held that post for two trienniums, which was the maximum length of mandate.

Legislation

Naheed Ahmed, BPW Pakistan

Stella Andria Kommitsi, BPW Cyprus.

Projects

Caterina Reda, BPW Italy
Naphaphen Vejajiva, BPW Thailand.

Public Relations

Stephanie Falzon, BPW Malta.
Dana Marcela, BPW Romania
Silvia Vigatà González, BPW Spain

Young BPW

Tomi Odunsi Fadina, BPW Nigeria
Otoha Hayashi, BPW Japan
Sheerah Kim, BPW Switzerland.
Benedetta Palermo, BPW Italy

Candidates for Regional Coordinators, as nominated by their regions

Asia Pacific – Narudee Kiengsiri, BPW Thailand
Africa – Hadia M. Gondji, BPW Addis Ababa
North America and the Caribbean – Dawne Williams, BPW St Kitts
Latin America – Diana Barragán, BPW Mexico
Europe – Anu Viks, BPW Estonia

Executive Finance Officer

Iguehi Abetiba, BPW Nigeria.
Eufemia Ippolito, BPW Italy

Executive Secretary

Jenny Gulamani-Abdulla, BPW Canada.
Bessie Hironimus, BPW USA

Vice President – Membership

Pinella Bombaci, BPW Malta
Giuseppa Seidita, BPW Italy.

Vice President – UN

Chularat Israngkool Na Ayutthaya, BPW Thailand
Marie -Claude Machon - Honoré, BPW France.

International President

Hellen Swales, BPW New Zealand

It was announced that the Nominations Committee had disqualified Dr. Catherine Bosshart, BPW Switzerland for advertising on the internet.

Point of order

The Parliamentarian said the disqualification of Dr. Catherine Bosshart was not acceptable as her nomination had been received by the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson and reviewed by her and the First Vice President – Membership.

She asked the Nominations Chairperson to refer this to the Chairperson of the Constitutional Advisory Committee.

The Nominations Chairperson had already consulted the CAC Chairperson on the procedures.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson asked to speak, confirming that all the candidates had been announced on the BPW International website with their details sent to all Affiliates. Their applications had been verified by the First Vice President – Membership and herself in 2020 before sending a report to the Nominations Committee confirming the process to date and pointing out the criteria that had to be followed. Several official complaints had also been received and handled. The incoming Nominations Chairperson at this meeting had consulted the CAC Chairperson about how the Nominations Committee should proceed. There was no guidance for how people do this so the CAC Chairperson had given general advice to the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee, copying in the Parliamentarian and the Chairperson of Elections. It was the understanding of the CAC Chairperson that the Nominations Committee did not have the power to disqualify anybody. They could report any recommendations or any factors that they discovered.

The International President suggested the CAC Chairperson yielded the floor to the Elections Chairperson because this was her prerogative.

The Elections Chairperson referred to what she had said previously, expressing her concern over the number of emails campaigning for or defaming some of the candidates and she urged any member who had received such communications to refer them to the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson and the Parliamentarians.

She believed the Nominations Committee had to verify the documentation from the candidates, but also to ensure there were no breaches of the Regulations. If there had been several incidents potentially leading to a disqualification, then unfortunately a number of standing candidates could be disqualified under the same rules.

The Elections Chairperson concluded by respecting the decision of the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair.

The International President reiterated that the Nominations Committee could not disqualify any candidate: their role was to verify nomination documents. The Elections Chairperson had described many incidents of many campaigning across the Standing Committees and the Executive Board. So the Elections Chairperson would address any complaints about campaigning.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson added that any issues of campaigning leading up to the General Assembly had to be referred to her but during the General Assembly they were to be referred to the Nominations Committee.

The International President said they should also be forwarded to the Elections Chair.

The Elections Chairperson explained that whenever an incident was reported to her, she referred it to both the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson and the Parliamentarians, so they were fully advised. She agreed that it was the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson who then made the necessary ruling.

The Parliamentarian notified the General Assembly that the nominations for all standing positions on the Executive were reviewed by the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson and the First Vice President – Membership prior to them being publicized. There had been a minor issue in that the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson had advised one of the candidates throughout the last 12 months and that had been dealt with.

She reiterated that the Nominations Committee did not have the right to remove a candidate as per the Constitution and Regulations.

The International President confirmed that the Nominations Committee could not remove any candidates so the only one who had been disqualified was Dr. Luisa Monini because she had served the maximum of two terms, as per the Constitution.

2. Introduction of candidates for the Executive.

Candidates for Vice President - UN

Chularat Israngkool Na Ayutthaya, BPW Thailand

Introducing herself with her nickname Toyting, Chularat was currently Sub-Coordinator for Asia Pacific in the Asean section and UN ESCAP representative for Asia Pacific in Bangkok and Thailand. She had frequently attended UN CSW at UN Headquarters in New York and supported many projects across Asia Pacific and Africa. Her late husband had been an Ambassador so she understood diplomatic culture and had lived in Europe, Asia and Africa, travelling to over 60 countries worldwide.

The world was in a moment of crisis which made it vital to work closely with the United Nations. The UN was not just about writing reports and attending meetings but taking action and making things happen at ground level by implementing all 17 SDGs. Networking with the UN was very important but even more important was giving emotional support and remaining positive-minded. In this pandemic situation the world needed love and harmony: people had to fly together like birds, so no matter what the situation people had to have confidence in their wings. With no children, she wanted to serve and devote herself to her BPW family.

Marie-Claude Machon-Honoré, BPW France

As BPW International's main representative to UNESCO, a twice-elected member of the NGO UNESCO Liaison Committee and Immediate Past Chairperson of the International Conference of NGO's and Liaison Committee, Marie-Claude viewed running for the position of UN Vice President as a natural step in her long-standing commitment to advocate for the right to education for all – especially girls – and with a focus on STEM. She was also committed to gender equality and equity, women's economic empowerment and leadership in all areas of life, with her experience and academic background in Anglophone Studies at the Sorbonne University and Gender and Development at the University of the West Indies.

Working with the first UN agency to be created and aligned with the UN strategy and 2030 Agenda, she understood the mechanics of the whole UN system. As a member of the

Coordination Group of the Collective Consultation of NGO's for Education 2030, she had been active advocating collectively for the role of civil society in defending the right to inclusive and equitable quality education for all as a key pillar to all SDG's and being able to engage in dialogue with Education Ministers, Permanent Delegations and other UN Agencies and International Organizations.

Marie-Claude had travelled to all regions of the world, being active in all international NGO, UNESCO forums and co-piloting several of them.

Candidates for Vice President – Membership

Giuseppa (Pinella) Bombaci, BPW Valetta Malta

A graduate in law, in her professional life she had been Director of many offices in the Italian Finance Ministry and a Professor of Administrative Law at the School of Economics in Italy. She had also been a judge in financial matters for 20 years.

A current member of BPW International's Executive, Pinella had been an active member of BPW Club Livorno in Italy for 28 years, had held roles such as President of BPW Italy, Secretary of the BPW Europe Regional Committee for 6 years and Regional Coordinator in the last triennium.

Her vision for membership was to restore peace, serenity, solidarity and BPW values. She planned to continue attracting many more women to join the organization, as she had already done: the new BPW clubs of Yerevan in Armenia, in Romania, Tbilisi in Georgia, Thessaloniki in Greece, Panevezys in Lithuania, Maiden's Tower in Turkey and individual members such as those in Slovenia and Denmark were proof of her success.

Giuseppa Seidita, BPW Italy

As a member of BPW Italy since 1992 and Past National President, Giuseppa knew that Membership figures were vital for the organization on all levels. Therefore, an active and successful Membership Chairperson was important for three reasons:

- 1) the President needed to ensure communication with the different federations and clubs so the Membership Chairperson had to be available to collaborate with her and answer questions immediately
- 2) membership stability or expansion was vital for BPW and the best strategy to increase membership was to improve communication, to promote innovative activities especially with young members, to promote best practices and to create interest in and motivation within BPW
- 3) concrete examples of successful strategies had to be collected and promoted also with digital tools to create a fruitful exchange between the committee and the members who were dedicated to increasing membership.

Therefore, it was vital to build a culture of cooperation and communication. Members had to relearn how to respect each other, even if they held different opinions. She encouraged everyone responsible for membership to make a special effort.

Candidates for Executive Secretary

Jenny Gulamani-Abdulla, BPW Canada

Jenny was Past President of BPW Canada. When watching the Consultation Day virtually at the start of CSW 65 this year she had asked whether it would have ever been possible to bring together 25,000 participants under one roof during a CSW in New York City. This was a larger audience than the 17,000 participants who had attended the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. At BPW International those numbers represented over half of the global membership across the world so inter-connected collaboration through solidarity had never been so necessary.

The pandemic had proven that through global cooperation vaccines could be made available to people worldwide. It was now time to come together to tackle the losses that had been endured and it was in this spirit that she was running for office, to unite joint and collective efforts to re-build for the organization and members what had been lost, because much had been lost during the pandemic. Members had lost their lives or loved ones, some had lost their jobs and income, some had lost their confidence: their communities were struggling with poverty, and anxiety was growing.

She was running for office because she knew that leadership required a deep sense of humility. It required compassion. It required the ability to bring members together. The spirit of camaraderie had never been more important than right at this very significant moment in history.

Bessie Hironimus, BPW USA

Bessie wanted to bring to the role her dedication, determination and passion for BPW. It was important to meet members' needs to see that BPW governance was followed and to make sure that members were well represented.

This job was very demanding, requiring experience in protocol, parliamentary law, a deep knowledge of our governance and ability to see that the Constitution was followed in the spirit in which it was drafted.

It was important to go back to basics, to clean house and to return to a democratic administration. Procedures needed to be revised and updated: they were currently permissive but without provisions for sanction in cases of non-compliance or abuse.

Teamwork was essential to succeed. The organization had to re-group and work in a unified, positive way for the advancement of BPW and of its members. There was a need for integrity, accountability and honesty. Members had to be involved and it was vital to work with them and for them.

In the role she would work to bring positive solutions, engagement, growth, participation: actions spoke louder than words. She pledged to represent the members with honor and enthusiasm, inspired by the first Executive Secretary of BPW, Dr. Lena Madesin Philips, herself. She would be their advocate and concluded with her slogan "Remember with Hironimus you are not anonymous".

Candidates for Executive Finance Officer

Eufemia Ippolito, BPW Italy

Eufemia had joined BPW in April 1987 and had dedicated much time promoting BPW values and ideas through her engagement. She had held the offices of Executive Finance Officer, National President and Past National President of BPW Italy and Chairperson of the BPW International Legal Advice Taskforce.

She was a lawyer specializing in company and international law and was competent in banking and financial advice, currently serving on the board of a bank in Puglia, Southern Italy. With so many years' experience in legal and economic matters she believed her skills would be useful to BPW International.

The role of BPW Executive Finance Officer was very important because it was necessary to ensure excellent management of dues and funds paid to the organization. If elected, she would manage the budget effectively and efficiently. It was necessary to verify that bookkeeping was always transparent by monitoring expenses and optimizing resources.

Iguehi Adetiba, BPW Nigeria

With a Master's degree in Business Admin and an MBA from ISA University of Navarra in Spain in collaboration with the Lagos Business School in Nigeria, Iguehi Adetiba was a chartered accountant, a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria and a member of the Institute of Taxation.

She had spent 22 years working at KPMG and had remained in the financial world ever since. After leaving KPMG, she moved to a multinational oil company from where she retired to set up her own firm of chartered accountants with three other ladies.

The Constitution of IBPW was clear as to the function of the Executive Finance Officer and with her skills and experience she would be able to ensure compliance.

Candidates for Regional Coordinators

Africa

Hadia M. Gondji, BPW Ethiopia

Hadia was currently President of BPW Addis Ababa, having graduated from the University of Nairobi in Business Administration. She had attended and participated at numerous conferences all over Africa and the world, networking with many African networks for promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, advocacy for women's economic rights in Ethiopia and across Africa. She had promoted women in finance and financial inclusion for women throughout Africa.

Being part of the New Faces, New Voices (NFNV) initiative, she had helped expand the role and influence of women in the financial sector, communicating with African women in gender departments and attending United Nations meetings for gender equality and women's empowerment. Hadia had organized training programs and capacity-building in trade and export while also empowering women in agriculture and agri-business in rural areas across Ethiopia for over 5 years.

Her plans for BPW Africa in the 2021 – 2023 triennium were:

- to expand Affiliates across Africa and resurrect the current Affiliates,

- to have a communication strategy among all BPW Affiliates in Africa
- to promote projects among BPW Africa Affiliates
- to increase connectivity.

Able to communicate across Africa and the world, she spoke Amharic, Yoruba, French, English and Arabic fluently, with some Swahili and Somali. She had won several awards in Ethiopia and Africa, such as the Best Entrepreneur Award from Addis Ababa and the Best Entrepreneur Award from the Africa Chamber of Commerce.

Asia Pacific

Dr. Narudee Kiengsiri, BPW Thailand

As the current Regional Coordinator for this triennium, she had overseen many wonderful projects. Starting in 2018, there had been a very successful Asia Pacific Regional Conference in Bangkok attended by almost 500 Delegates from 40 member countries and over 30 prominent speakers from around the world. It was publicized in 176 countries.

Narudee congratulated BPW Taiwan who had registered the highest membership growth (43%). Membership expansion was an ideal goal, but during the pandemic, retention was the priority for some countries. Networking played a key role in this, as demonstrated by crises such as the explosion in the Port of Beirut in Lebanon, when many BPW members extended helping hands. She again congratulated BPW Taiwan, BPW Thailand and BPW Korea and several other Affiliates who had helped in Lebanon, demonstrating the value of BPW networking.

Two sub-regional conferences had been held in this triennium: BPW Oceanic in New Zealand and BPW East Asia in Japan. The second Young BPW Symposium had also been held in Japan and she thanked her five sub-regional coordinators for their work:

- Carolyn Savage – Oceania
- Chularat Israngkool Na Ayutthaya – ASEAN
- Catherina (Hyun) Park – East Asia
- Her Royal Highness Dr. Hissah Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah – West Asia.

There were many more things to do in the Asia Pacific region. Narudee believed she had the experience and energy to deliver these, especially as the next Congress would be held in that region. She invited all to attend.

Europe

Anu Viks, BPW Estonia

Anu began by explaining that although Estonia sounded like a country from a fairy tale movie it was actually in the north east of Europe. Anu had been a member of BPW for almost 20 years, holding different positions in BPW Estonia, including the role as national President for three years. She was also a member of the Leadership and Lifelong Learning Taskforce for BPW Europe, which had organized many successful training sessions. The next one on “Leadership training for women” would begin in May 2021.

Europe remained the biggest region in BPW and very a strong region in empowering women. Her mission as the Regional Coordinator would be to carry on the work of BPW Europe and also to encourage more members to participate on European levels. It was

essential for members to participate at every level of leadership and also in all the working groups and activities of BPW Europe. The COVID-19 situation had provided a very good opportunity in the form of internet communication tools, which would be harnessed to make members more active. Anu believed in inclusion and inclusive leadership, and when working together it was possible to lift mountains.

Latin America

Diana Barragán, BPW Mexico

Diana Barragán had been Regional Coordinator from 2017 to 2020. As a mother and grandmother, in her career she had been an Attorney at Law, a university Professor, Clinical Psychologist and Executive Director of a Youth Foundation. She had coordinated the National Council of NGOs and chaired several women's groups.

In her political activities she had been a candidate for the Andean Parliament and for the National Congress. With three undergraduate and postgraduate university degrees in psychology, development studies and law degree she continued to practice law and was also a member of the advisory board of Global Chamber of Business Leaders.

In BPW, as well as being President of BPW Quito twice, she had been a member of the Standing Committee on Constitutional Review, Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Legislation, President of BPW Ecuador, Liaison to the Regional Coordinator – Latin America, Councilor during the National Constitutional Assembly and a member of the Standing Committee for two terms.

Her main focus as Regional Coordinator was to base all activities on solid foundations and institutionality, with respect for the BPW governance documents.

North America and the Caribbean

Dawne Williams, BPW St Kitts

Described as a glass ceiling breaker and a trailblazer who had led large and diverse teams over multiple countries she was delighted to have been responsible for revitalizing the dormant BPW St Kitts club, taking it on the initial path to success by being the first President.

As a woman of passion and infinite love for humanity, she saw her purpose in life as helping others to unleash their fullest potential. This has enabled her throughout her chosen career in financial services. Having realized that women and girls were among the most vulnerable of all humanity, she had been inspired to work with them on a mentoring and nurturing program. It was while pursuing that vocation that she remembered there was an organization working for the improvement of women and girls and she sought out the first President of BPW St Kitts, Mrs. Pamela Ward and the rest was history.

Like Mahatma Gandhi she believed the best way people could find themselves was to lose themselves in the service of others. This was her mantra and she would continue to carry on the work trail-blazed by Dr. Lena Madesin Philips over 100 years ago. She looked forward to being elected and afforded the opportunity once more to be the Regional Coordinator for the North America and Caribbean region where she could work in harmony with members, building and restoring to repair the damage done to this august

institution over the last triennium and to ensure that the lessons learned were used to build a better, stronger organization.

#choosetochallenge would be etched on future actions to stop all forms of violence against women and girls.

Candidates for Young BPW Representative

Tomi Odunsi Fadina, BPW Nigeria

Tomi described what qualified her to drive the change that everyone wanted to see. She had a great sense of humor but was passionate, driven and determined to seek transformational results, guided by the strength of the BPW vision. She would work hand-in-hand with BPW Young Members who were determined to drive the change they wanted to see.

With over a decade of experience in entertainment and as an actor, she was the lead on one of the biggest soap operas in Africa. Also a singer who shared the stage with local and international artists, Tomi was the CEO of digital communications and media company CGT Media Ltd in Nigeria. She was well experienced in media consultation for inherited brands as Mitsubishi Motors, Hyundai, Synagogue and several others.

The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan had appointed her as Ambassador for Academic Sports to revolutionize grassroots sports across the country.

Tomi had led and participated actively in BPW projects on club, national and international levels, understanding how to maintain and manage legacies of stability and brand equity, especially in this pivotal time in BPW's history. She had the experience and expertise, believing that a solid, holistic ever-growing digital structure and processes to include a wider diversity would deliver BPW sustainability, a great membership experience and increase the percentage of active members in clubs and the UN. An empathic and teachable leader, she would encourage young members to run for office on the Board at Executive level while fostering intergenerational connections and equity. Tomi believed in the power of the BPW sisterhood and would drive the changes that the members wanted to see.

Otoha Hayashi, BPW Japan

Otoha Hayashi was the Past Young BPW representative for Asia Pacific in Japan and current Chairperson of the Organizational Committee of BPW Japan.

She mentioned several reasons to prove herself a suitable candidate for position of Young BPW Representative:

- 1) She had been born and raised in Tokyo, studied in New Zealand, then studied and worked in the United Kingdom before returning to Tokyo. Having lived in Asia, Oceania and Europe she was able to think and see matters from more than one angle, which was an advantage in such an international position.
- 2) In 2017, during her term as Young BPW Asia Pacific, she had organized the first ever Young BPW event in Asia Pacific in the form of Young BPW symposium with great support from BPW Singapore.

3) She had also organized and hosted the second symposium with the support of BPW Japan in 2019. Through organizing these symposia and attending conferences and congress, she had been able to meet many BPW members around the world of all ages and nationalities.

Her goal in this role would be to build a platform based on the organization's existing e-learning or membership program platforms to maximize the strength of BPW by fully harnessing the membership's wide diversity in age, culture and professions. To achieve this, she had already planned to form a team of Young BPW and increase the cross-generational engagement to continue the legacy of this beautiful and historical organization.

Sheerah Yuhee Kim, BPW Switzerland

Sheerah began by commending the current role-holder, Neelima Basnet, who had brought young members together on a digital platform and connected them in a new way. This had been a true revelation which she planned to continue.

She highlighted three key features in her nomination profile. She was very much versed in working across different committees and Boards of Directors together with various CEOs and CFOs in her organization. She had been with her current employer, a Swiss reinsurance company for 15 years so had global exposure, including working across different continents for the previous 5 years, which had involved travelling extensively in Hong Kong, Singapore and Beijing. Sheerah had also attended several BPW conferences, but wanted to really highlight the business and professional part of BPW.

With almost 10 years in BPW, Sheerah had joined during her studies and was now a senior analyst in corporate strategy, but identified the key frameworks and the learnings from BPW paired well with her professional experience so she wanted to make these more accessible on an international level for all the Affiliates within the federation. As a businesswoman she was keen to see a KPI framework with set targets to achieve within the next triennium.

Although she was already 34, she wanted her role to be fresh, daring, cutting edge and inspiring while herself being inspired.

Benedetta Palermo, BPW Italy

As a member of BPW Italy, Roma Campidoglio having joined BPW in 2012 after attending the European Congress in Sorrento, Benedetta had served as Young Representative at all levels in BPW Italy. An important achievement had been using her knowledge as a lawyer to help modify BPW Italy's Constitution, introducing the position of Young BPW representative at national level.

In 2017, she had been elected Young BPW Europe Representative, and was now standing as Young BPW International Representative to continue her BPW journey. In that role she would organize an annual Young BPW International Symposium, enabling Young BPW members from all over the world to meet and construct networks and friendships.

In 2019, she represented BPW International as a Delegate at CSW 63 in New York. She would like BPW International to grant passes to young members each year in order to

participate as Delegates at CSW, with the relevant financial support. As the next Young BPW International Representative she would like to promote the inclusion of Young BPW members in all BPW positions, not just those specific to young members. She would also like to encourage young members to take the initiative and start new projects working in collaboration with senior members.

Report of the Young BPW Representative, Neelima Basnet

A video was played to the meeting. Neelima thanked everyone for giving her the opportunity to be a global citizen and reach out to almost all parts of the world through Young BPW members.

She listed some requests. To let young BPW members be a part of the Executive Board of clubs and federations and also to give UN passes to young members to attend UN sessions so that they could contribute to the global conversation, and to support their projects by expressing appreciation of their work.

To also support them in events and hopefully if Nepal and the next Executive approved this, she would like to welcome everyone to Nepal for a Young BPW International Symposium or similar event.

Lastly, she thanked the President of BPW Nepal and her BPW Club President who had given her the opportunity to be part of this global platform: as her term of office drew to a close she believed firmly that this was just the beginning of her contribution to BPW. Neelima moved her report. The report was seconded by the Executive Secretary.

Point of clarification

BPW USA directed a concern to the Parliamentarian, referring to section 8.3.4 paragraph 4, the first sentence, of the Constitution & Regulations. She was confused about that text and wanted clarification on the Nominations process. Also she was concerned that the Nominations Chairperson Michelle Husby had been muted and then removed from the meeting without being given the opportunity to complete her report. BPW USA asked for the Nominations Chairperson to be allowed to complete her report, she also alleged that in trying to make this point earlier, her digital hand was lowered by an unknown third party repeatedly.

The International President indicated that she agreed that the Nominations Chairperson should complete her report.

The Chief Parliamentarian asked for the meeting to close out the Young BPW representative's report by inviting questions relating to that before moving on. She had already been in contact with various people to ensure that the Nominations Chairperson would then be able to complete her report. The International President agreed that she also wanted to assure BPW USA that discussions were in progress to arrange for the Nominations Chairperson to complete her report.

Discussion

Referring to the Report by the Young BPW Representative, the Executive Secretary thanked her for her contribution to the Executive during the last difficult three years. Neelima had been an asset for BPW and for the whole world, by publicizing the great

potential of Young BPW members. She had acted as an ambassador and the Executive Secretary hoped that BPW had given her as much as she had given the organization. BPW USA had been impressed by how Neelima had executed her duties and encouraged so many young women to step up: her presentation at the Leaders' Summit had been most inspiring. She hoped that the Young BPWs would continue onward in her example. Past International President Liz Benham congratulated the Young BPW Representative, adding that she was a brilliant young woman who had surely been an inspiration to the Young BPWs around her, as shown by the number of candidates standing to succeed her. BPW UK congratulated Neelima for a fantastic triennium not only for the Young BPWs but also for those young at heart who had also attended her e-training sessions. She hoped that she would continue to be part of the BPW history. The First Vice President – Membership said that Neelima truly represented the future and it was a shame that she was not continuing on the Executive Board.

BPW Australia thanked Neelima for the digital platform that she had implemented over the previous 12 months. Being able to share in the opportunity for webinars coming out of Nepal and the Philippines greatly enhanced the potential of BPW and hopefully the new team would build on that going forward. She was also very impressed with the quality of the Young BPWs standing for the International position.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich thanked Neelima for all her hard work and for having had the courage to defend what was right. She thanked her for her honesty and integrity. As an organization defending women's rights, members had to defend their own rights inside the organization. The Past international president also thanked Neelima's mentor, Ambica Shrestha for the opportunity that she gave her, to be in this international platform.

BPW Mexico thanked Neelima for all the work she had done for BPW and for fighting for all the members.

Before continuing with the Agenda, the Parliamentarian referred the meeting back to the question by BPW USA and read out the section from 8.3.4 "At the General Assembly" of the Procedure Manual: *"Nominations from the floor at the General Assembly are only permitted for positions where no candidate has been nominated prior to the General Assembly. Intending candidates must be prepared to serve a three (3) year term. A Nominations Committee is formed on the first day of the General Assembly. The Nominations Committee consists of one (1) representative from each region represented at the General Assembly, usually decided at the Regional meeting and announced at the pre-General Assembly International Board meeting."* – *"Affiliates who nominate a candidate from the floor must within two (2) hours produce the full documentation required of the nominee to the Nominations Committee Chairperson."* Following that, under paragraph 5: *"The Nominations Committee checks the documentation for compliance and decides whether a nomination is acceptable and meets all the criteria. If there are nominations from the floor the Nominations Committee Chairperson announces the nominations at the end of the day. All candidates are expected to comply with the requirements."* That was the role of the Nominations Committee. She invited the IT team to allow the Nominations Chairperson to complete her report.

There were some technical difficulties preventing the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee from rejoining the meeting. A new Zoom link was sent to her.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson had requested previously that anybody who was going to be in the Observers' Room but scheduled to be speaking at

Congress should be included as a special Delegate, as there were several people including the Chairperson of the Nominations committee who were not delegates but had an essential part to play in the meeting. This did not appear to have been implemented.

Point of clarification

The Executive Secretary pointed out that even if she could not attend personally, the Chairperson of the Nominations committee could potentially communicate with one of her committee members in order to complete the report.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson denied this as it had to be the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee who would complete the report.

Point of order

BPW Spain did not understand how the work of the Nominations Committee had not been respected, as they had already spent over three hours reviewing all the candidates and their decision on some candidates seemed to have been dismissed.

The Chief Parliamentarian replied that that they had to adhere to the Constitutional rules and the Constitutional Chairperson had actually dealt with that issue. The Nominations Committee could only submit a recommendation to the Constitutional Advisory Committee, but this had not been done in the due process. They did not have the right to formally have someone removed.

Point of clarification

BPW Australia asked if it was correct that no nomination had been received for the Chairperson of the Standing committee on health.

The Chief Parliamentarian confirmed this was correct and nominations could have been called from the floor.

Point of clarification

BPW Singapore asked whether the Young BPW report had been moved and seconded.

The International President confirmed it had been moved and many people had seconded it.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson pointed out that the fact that the Health nomination had not been valid should actually have been presented as a recommendation in order to receive the assent of the meeting.

Briefing on Reports by the UN representatives on page 68 to page 79 of the Workbook

The Second Vice President – UN Catherine Bosshart began by thanking Ayça Mazman, the UN administrator, who had worked very hard during the triennium. She had handled all the yearly accreditations of the UN representatives as well as registrations for special conferences during the year. An almost daily job was to inform the BPW UN Representatives of upcoming conferences and meetings at the different UN agencies. She also took care of the registration of BPW Delegates during CSW.

She also acknowledged the great contribution by Past International President Elizabeth Benham, which had inadvertently been omitted from the report. For two triennia she had been the Treasurer at CONGO, the umbrella organization of all non-governmental organizations working at the UN. This was a critical role and she had managed to greatly improve the finances at CONGO during her tenure. The Second Vice President – UN was grateful for her dedication and support.

Thanks were also extended to Francesca Burack, one of BPW's UN representatives in New York and former BPW New York President. She had worked tirelessly to resolve all logistical questions in New York, taking Delegates to the theater and other cultural events and creating a warm atmosphere.

Appreciation was also given to the partner at Markham who always received the BPW delegation at her offices during CSW, along with Harriet Friedlander who invited the BPW executive and UN delegates to a lunch preceding the equal pay event at the German Mission.

Ursula Schmid had worked hard as the webmaster for the BPW UN Website, ensuring that the newsletters, details of events and updates reached BPW members on the website and on Facebook. She did a great amount of work on a voluntary basis.

She expressed her thanks to all the BPW UN representatives who had dedicated their time, money and effort to enhance BPW's visibility and to strengthen the organization's advocacy worldwide. The format of the UN report in this Congress workbook had been changed to create an overview for the whole group.

BPW had been very active at the UN Human Rights Councils in New York and in Geneva, at the CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women in Geneva, at the ILO. Special mention was made of [ILO Convention No. 190](#) which was fighting for better working situations of migrant workers. She moved the adoption of the reports of the BPW UN representatives.

BPW USA seconded the report of the BPW UN Representatives. There were no questions.

Constitutional amendments

Constitution item 1. C1, the Registered Office

Current wording	Proposed wording
C1 the registered address is Rue de Saint-Jean 26 1203 Geneva, Switzerland.	Replace with the current official address seat one the registered address is Rue de Rothschild 22, Geneva 1201, Switzerland.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson invited Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich to formally propose this amendment. She did so and this was seconded by Past International President Liz Benham.

Friendly amendment

BPW Switzerland had proposed a friendly amendment which had been accepted by past President Dr. Yasmin Darwich. The amendment read: *"The registered office of BPW International is the Office of BPW Switzerland in Bern."*

Discussion on the Friendly Amendment

Speaking against the Friendly Amendment, Past International President Dr. Antoinette Rüegg expressed her surprise as a member of BPW Switzerland as she had not been informed about that proposal. She felt from experience that it was not good to mix a Federation with the international office. When the international office had been in the UK, it was in a separate location to the offices of BPW UK.

BPW Spain was convinced it was necessary to register the federation in BPW Switzerland in order to reduce costs because if it was necessary to rent a space as in the last three

years, only for an address, this was an unnecessary overhead. It was gracious of BPW Switzerland to offer use of their official address in Bern.

BPW Nigeria spoke against the proposal because BPW Switzerland was one out of 100 members and it would be risky to combine the offices. BPW International had to remain independent.

Point of clarification

The Chief Parliamentarian asked whether the mover and the seconder of the first motion would have the right to respond at this point.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson replied that it would be necessary to deal with the Friendly Amendment first but without the facility to vote during the meeting, this would be difficult.

BPW Switzerland explained that the proposal was simply an offer to use the Bern address to retain independence for BPW International and not to have to change the Constitution if the registered office changed.

Point of clarification

The Executive Secretary doubted that BPW Switzerland would receive any mail for BPW International. She thanked BPW Switzerland for offering to provide a local address, as previously the address belonged to a member.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson requested input from the Resolutions Chairperson about the Standing Orders which had not addressed Friendly Amendments in this virtual format.

The Resolutions Chairperson replied that for a Friendly Amendment, if accepted by both the mover and the seconder then it immediately became a substantive motion which was then spoken to: a debate was not necessary if the Friendly Amendment had been accepted by the Proposer of the original Resolution.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson announced that the meeting would move forward to discuss the updated Resolution that the Registered Office of BPW International be at the office of BPW Switzerland in Bern.

Point of clarification

Referring to the BPW International Standing Orders for these General Assemblies, the Parliamentarian read out C (3): *"No new amendment during the virtual online meeting that requires voting is allowed, unless it is a friendly amendment that the proposer has accepted without the need for vote. It should be presented in writing (e.g. by email) and put on the screen. No new amendments that require voting will be allowed"*.

Point of information

As mover of the original motion, Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich asked the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson if the presenter had time to give the rationality of the proposal when there was a Friendly Amendment.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson pointed out that it had been read out and displayed on screen but invited the Proposer, BPW Switzerland, to explain the rationale because this would become the amendment.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich asked if she would also be given the opportunity to speak.

The Chief Parliamentarian pointed out that the main issue was whether or not this Friendly Amendment had been approved or accepted by Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich, as this was required.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson replied that it had already been stated that it was acceptable to her.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich asked if she could be given time to talk about the rationality of this motion.

Both the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson and the Chief Parliamentarian agreed that she had the right of reply.

Right of reply

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich responded that she was not replying, rather presenting the rationality, explaining that during the past years the address of BPW International had changed several times and to be registered in Switzerland required an office address rather than a PO Box. Two members of the Executive had therefore decided to rent an office, although the costs were unknown to the rest of the Executive.

However, she accepted this Friendly Amendment because it was important to have a permanent address to receive correspondence. She understood that BPW Switzerland had had this office for many years and thanked BPW Switzerland for this proposal which would save money and avoid future problems.

Point of clarification/information

Second Vice President – UN Dr. Catherine Bosshart explained that BPW International was currently registered at the Geneva Welcome Centre along with other NGOs. There was a large conference room which was free to use and the office was located directly behind the UN Human Rights Council so it was very convenient for all BPW's UN representatives. The new office of BPW Switzerland was shared with a Swiss umbrella organization of gender-based NGOs. It would not be appropriate for BPW to have a UN representatives' office in Bern or elsewhere in Switzerland as there were no UN agencies outside Geneva.

Point of order

BPW USA queried the sequence of speakers as she had been waiting to speak as the second person in favor of the proposal. BPW Spain had also spoken and BPW Switzerland had been the proposer of the Friendly Amendment.

The Parliamentarian checked the screenshots.

In the meantime, the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson summarized the purpose of the original Resolution, to correct the address of the registered office of BPW International. The Registered Office was no longer at the address cited in the current wording, because that had belonged to a BPW member who had retired so the office was no longer available. The proposal was to change the one currently being used. The Friendly Amendment would propose that the office be relocated.

Past International President Liz Benham had been the initiator of the whole process to register BPW International in Switzerland. Originally, BPW International had used the office of a member as the permanent address, to receive correspondence and bank statements from the then Swiss bank account. Today, there was no Swiss bank account so the address would be used for service of legal documents and other communications by mail. It did not mix BPW International with BPW Switzerland. She also thanked BPW

Switzerland for their generous offer. They were a long-standing Federation located in the country where BPW International was registered.

The Chief Timekeeper announced that the time for the official session had ended but the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson recommended continuing the session as there was a further speaker against the Resolution and then the right of reply would be given to the Proposer.

The Parliamentarian did not see there was a further person waiting to speak against.

The IT team pointed out there were several hands raised, and asked who should be allowed to speak next.

BPW Italy spoke against the Resolution, having listened to the Second Vice President – UN. It was important to differentiate between the two aspects while retaining the current address in Geneva.

The CAC Chairperson gave the right of reply to the Proposer.

Right of reply

Past international President Dr. Yasmin Darwich thought there had been a misunderstanding. She hoped the next Executive would keep the existing office space. That was a separate issue to the need for a permanent address to receive correspondence and to be officially registered. It was good to enable BPW UN representatives to have a work space in Geneva but this did not benefit the rest of the organization.

The CAC Chairperson closed the discussion on the motion which would be voted upon after the meeting, and handed the Chair back to the International President.

The International President urged all speakers to adhere to their timings as the meeting was running very late.

External Resolutions

The Resolutions Chairperson opened the External Resolutions session.

1. 2020-01 BPW making the achievement of the SDGs is essential. Page 110 of the Workbook

The Proposer, Past International President Sylvia Perry, described how making the achievement of the SDGs that need momentum in BPW International – BPW International Advocacy and Action was the intent of her Resolution. Members would recognize that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were very much part of the organization's international policy. But this Resolution asked Affiliates and their members to gear their everyday activities, not only their BPW activities, towards their achievement.

This Resolution set out how members might minimize their carbon footprint, minimize waste and review how they live, in making their contribution to countering climate change. In 2020, the Proposer had actively informed members about the time 25 years earlier when the targets for women and girls to have an equal and sustainable future were firmly established in the [12 Areas of Concern in the Platform For Action at the Beijing Conference](#). BPW International's advocacy and its representations made constantly since then had led through to the SDGs, which were aimed at the achievement of those same goals. BPW International was focused on the SDGs, so to achieve them as quickly as necessary meant accelerating efforts and making action, our advocacy for the fulfilment of the SDGs, the momentum for the work of the organization.

BPW Ireland seconded the Resolution.

The Resolutions Chairperson said that this External Resolution had therefore been moved and seconded and would go through to the web-based platform for voting.

2. 2020-02 Gender Responsive Budgeting on page 112 of the Workbook

The Proposer, BPW New Zealand, sought to encourage the governments to adopt a Gender Responsive Budgeting lens including advocacy, gender impact analysis, and gender responsive budget documents in close collaboration with women's organizations and civil society. She urged all Affiliates to recognize that this was an important tool for ensuring greater consistency between the economic goals and the social commitments of government budgets. This ensured that governments identified those public spending lines clearly benefiting women and girls. To ensure this gender budgeting approach was focused, national statistical agencies would need to be set up to ensure all government data was disaggregated by gender to allow for better spending analysis. An International Labour Organization report had noted that gender responsive initiatives helped breach the persistent inequalities between women and men and facilitated development by integrating gender issues into policy and budgets.

The promotion of a gender responsive budget had become more widespread in 1995 with the Beijing Platform for Action, when the UN called for governments to assess how public expenditure benefited women and to adjust their budgets in a move to contribute further commitment towards gender equality.

Generally speaking, initiatives had not been successfully applied to mainstream budget areas, instead being concentrated on small allocations targeting women and girls. So without a push by civil society and women's organizations such as BPW International little progress would be made in this area. Women had the right to equality in all areas. It must become embedded across legal systems, upheld in practice and law, providing actions to measure against. Since all areas of life related to gender equality, including SDGs 1, 2, 4, 5 and 17, any areas of gender discrimination had to be closed wherever they appeared.

BPW UK seconded the Resolution, adding that BPW members worldwide promoted equality for all women. That was the mission of the organization.

The Resolutions Chairperson said this would now proceed to web-based platform for voting.

3. 2020-03 Financial Inclusion for Women on p. 114 of the Workbook

The Proposer was International President Dr. Amany Asfour who explained that increasing access and the use of quality financial products and services were essential in inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction. When women participated in the financial system they were better able to manage risks, invest in a business and fund large expenditures like education or health improvement. Increasing women's financial inclusion was especially important as women disproportionately experienced poverty stemming from unequal division of labor and a lack of control over economic resources. Because they lacked collateral, women were more likely to be denied formal credit than men and often paid higher interest rates. Providing local women worldwide with effective and affordable financial tools to save and borrow money, make and receive payments and manage risk was critical to both women's empowerment and poverty reduction.

However, the path to greater women's financial inclusion was dependent on the creation of a more gender-inclusive financial system to address the specific demand and supply side barriers faced by women, supported by an inclusive regulatory environment. Financial services were a core enabler for consumption, education, stable employment, growth and wealth creation. Lack of access to financial services reduced women's ability to climb out of poverty, increased the risk of falling into poverty, contributed to women's marginalization and reduced their ability to re-engage in measurable and productive economic activities. Financial inclusion of women was a multi-stakeholder responsibility including banks, financial institutions, telecommunications, analysis partners and organizations for financial inclusion. The Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion (GPFI) www.gpfi.org had developed indicators which assessed the state of financial inclusion and digital financial services nationally and globally. Level data covering major components of sustainable financial inclusion development were critical to inform these policies, to monitor the effect of the initiative. So BPW International sought to support the economic empowerment of women to promote awareness about financial inclusion indicators through developing better financial products which were responsive to women. At the African level, the President and the Chairperson of the African Union <https://au.int/> had already indicated that 2020 would be the start of financial inclusion for women. So it was the perfect time to address the international financial inclusion of women.

BPW Egypt seconded this Resolution and it was moved to the web-based platform for voting.

4. 2020-04 Gender Pay Gap at Retirement, BPW New Zealand on p116 of the Workbook

The Proposer explained that this Resolution addressed the compounding impact of the gender pay gap on women once they reached retirement. In many regions women were less likely to complete primary, secondary and tertiary education, significantly impacting their earning potentials. Globally, women were impacted by the gender pay gap throughout their working career and more likely to take time away from contracted employment for unpaid work that was unrecognized by governments and did not contribute to retirement savings schemes. Some countries were discussing or introducing measures to improve the gender pay gap but unrecognized and unpaid work remained an issue that needed more awareness. Much of this work was deeply meaningful to us and important to the wellbeing of members' communities, such as mothers caring for children, children caring for elderly parents, and caring for disabled family members or working as volunteers.

These factors varied from country to country, but the gender pay gap was a persistent reality impacting women: even more so for indigenous women, ethnic minorities and disabled women. This Resolution was particularly important to younger women because the faster society, incorporating the public, private and NGO sectors, addressed the gender pay gap the less the bottom line for women today would be impacted when they retired in the future. Studies had shown that the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had disproportionately affected women and particularly indigenous women and women of ethnic minorities. If society had taken steps to address unpaid and unrecognized work and created a post-COVID response that provided a gender lens, the

pandemic for women would have been mitigated. it was vital to create a workforce that was resilient for women too and any crisis responses had to factor in women.

In the lead-up to CSW, the UN produced a report reviewing key issues for women and girls in relation to the main theme of CSW. This report was referred to as the Zero Draft and provided the framework to start discussions among member states in the UN regions. In 2021, the report highlighted the urgent need to address structural barriers in order to realize gender equality. It also recognized that women and girls still undertook a disproportionate amount of unpaid and domestic work which impacted their ability to participate in decision-making processes and occupy leadership positions, with a full participation in the labor market. In alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, long-term thinking was needed in order to be inclusive and seek sustainable solutions.

The Second, BPW Germany, described how in her country the gender pension gap stood at 50%. In Europe, Germany came last not only concerning the gender pay gap but also in terms of the gender pension gap. It was necessary to identify the mechanisms leading to such a large gender pension gap. Only targeted policy measures should be planned and implemented. Studies on women's biographical patterns and pension income prospects had analyzed the effects of differing career patterns on the pension received by women. The pension gap was already ingrained at the moment when women chose their profession. Jobs mostly done by women were paid less than jobs done mostly by men, such as care work in hospitals and children's education. The pension gap then became bigger when women stayed at home with their own children and interrupted their careers. So unequal employment opportunities, structural disadvantages in returning to work after family-related break and the lack of respect of family responsibilities at the workplace were the main causes of the gender pension gap. In addition, the fact that women could potentially drop out of their jobs in order to stay at home with their young children made them less effective in the eyes of employers and they were stigmatized regardless of whether or not they planned to have family. It was expected that women would combine family and work life, whereas men did not have to explain their family plans to potential employers. So, women continued to carry a one-sided burden when it came to equal employment opportunities, which was why unpaid care work should be equally shared between men and women. The development of a consistent life/work policy would create better conditions for women and men to leave and enter the labor market and to place responsibilities on both in their family and working lives. The aim of creating a gender equitable society for women and men called for collective reporting in order to break out of these deeply rooted structures of inequality.

The Resolutions Chairperson confirmed that this Resolution would go to the web-based platform for voting.

5. 2020-05 Public Procurement for Women Owned Businesses, p 118 of the Workbook

The Proposer, International President Dr. Amany Asfour explained that worldwide compared to their male counterparts, women entrepreneurs faced disproportionately complex and inter-connected barriers to accessing equal economic opportunities. These ranged from legal and regulatory hurdles to social economic mores and gender bias through to lack of skills networks and finance. For instance, women owned or managed only 1 in 5 exporting firms, even though they owned an estimated 38% of small and

medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Women spent at least twice as much on domestic and care work as men, which reduced the time they could spend on remunerated opportunities. With a market of USD15 trillion per year, women had access to only one percent of it, so women-owned businesses were only given the opportunity of 1% of the USD15 trillion market dominated by men. UN Women endorsed gender responsive procurement as a critical part of the solution for gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender responsive procurement in the selection of services, goods and civil work should consider the impact on gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women had implemented tools that would increase women vendors, to enable them to share in UN Women's procurement spending. Women entrepreneurs were a growing economic force representing a significant share of employment in economic growth potential. Public procurement spending accounted for approximately 10 to 15% of GDP in developed countries (30% of GDP in developing countries). Procurement with diversity and inclusion could thus be used as a powerful tool to economically empower women and to combat poverty by increasing the income of women, and ensured sustainable social economic benefits. In the African Union, several African countries (eg Kenya) now required that 30% of all government procurement went to small and medium enterprises including women, youth and people with disabilities. President Ramaphosa of South Africa, Chairperson of the African Union, had already implemented this in South Africa so that at least 40% of all government procurement went to women-owned businesses. So for BPW International this was a way to achieve economic growth and the organization should advocate for public procurement to be used as a tool to achieve socio-economic objectives through government, regulatory and buying powers and for BPW International to have it as an advocacy pillar.

This was seconded by BPW Egypt, who added that women faced challenges in accessing contracts, and the procurement process tended not to facilitate successful outcomes for women. Studies showed that women-owned businesses able to successfully win government contracts usually grew and in return contributed to increased GDP growth while also improving the female labor participation rate. Women-owned companies tended to employ more women than men-owned firms. Greater procurement opportunities for women-owned enterprises would provide a springboard for advancement in women's economic inclusion and labor market participation. It also made sense that public funds should go towards this public benefit.

The Resolutions Chairperson confirmed that this Resolution would go to the web-based platform. There was to be no debate.

Friendly Amendment

BPW Canada asked if a Friendly Amendment could be entertained if accepted by the Mover and Second.

The Resolutions Chairperson checked with the Chief Parliamentarian, who confirmed that the Friendly Amendment had to be made in writing and accepted by the Mover and the Second.

Point of order

The Executive Secretary wondered if the International President had given the Chair to the Vice President and was directing her opinions to the floor. She also pointed out that the Nominations Chairperson had not finished her report.

The Resolutions Chairperson confirmed she would return the Chair to the International President after she had completed the Resolutions Session. No doubt the International President was aware that the Nominations Chairperson had not finished her report. Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan had received a message from the IT Team saying that the Nominations Chairperson had been unable to reconnect to the meeting due to an internet problem at her end. The meeting could rest assured that this message had been forwarded to the International President and the Elections Chairperson so they could address how to deal with the situation.

Point of information

That morning BPW Spain had sent the Resolutions Chairperson an email informing her that the Program contained some errors about dates. It had also stated that in today's session the voting results for the next International President would be announced but this was impossible the voting would still be continuing. Also, she asked how much time the candidates for Standing Committees Chairs would be given to make their presentations the next day.

The Resolutions Chairperson replied that this did not form part of the Resolutions session. Instead, she thanked the Movers and Seconders of the 5 External Resolutions and hoped the meeting was appreciative of the work, passion and enthusiasm behind all the Resolutions which sought to support women and girls.

She returned the Chair to the International President.

The International President thanked her for chairing such an important session addressing the daily lives of women and girls, which was BPW International's core business.

The Elections Chairperson wanted to follow up on the issue that had been raised regarding the announcement of the election results. She agreed that the voting had not yet closed so it would be dealt with in the next session. Additionally, the Nominations Committee report would have to be adjusted and re-submitted during the next session.

Point of clarification

The CAC Chairperson referred to the message received from the Nominations Chair. She had also received an email showing the Zoom response which apparently said: "The host removed you from this meeting".

The international President said that IT had indicated that if someone was removed they could not re-enter the meeting but she had understood that another link would be sent to her.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan referred to a further email from the IT team which said that they had fixed the connection problem for the Nominations Chairperson but she had been unable to rejoin because of a technical problem on her system.

The international President asked BPW USA if they had further information.

BPW USA began describing how after leaving the meeting, the Nominations Chairperson had been unable to return as Zoom seemed to be blocking her IP address. The IT Team had sent a new link with Observer-only access.

Point of clarification

The Parliamentarian explained that Observers were only given 20 or 30 minutes allocated time in a fully delegated meeting. Having received the email from the Nominations Chair, the CAC Chairperson and the Elections Chairperson had been

working behind the scenes to restore access. As noted by the Elections Chair, her report had to be amended before being re-submitted ready to be moved for acceptance.

The International President asked for guidance on this from the CAC Chair.

The CAC Chairperson presumed she had to do that in the next session but referred back to her request from yesterday whereby anybody who had to formally address this General Assembly should be given Delegate status with Special Rights, as has happened with the Resolutions Chair, who also was an Observer. So, they would be able to conduct their work and only allowed to speak when it was their turn to do so and not have a vote. She also wondered whether some of the Standing Committee Chairs who were not Delegates at the General Assembly might have been in the Observers room. This situation had been resolved for the UN Representative, Marie Claude Machon-Honoré and should apply routinely in similar cases.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan explained that the Program had been given to the IT team and at the time this session did not contain nominations. So anything already listed was programmed ahead of time, but the nominations had originally been scheduled for the previous day. So, this last minute change had been difficult to accommodate. This situation could recur so they would double-check with IT next time to ensure that anyone needing to speak would be able to do so.

The CAC Chairperson accepted this explanation.

The International President thanked the Past International President for trying to resolve this issue. She then asked for guidance from the Parliamentarian about the report of the Nominations Chairperson, whether it should be edited and resubmitted.

The Parliamentarian had been in discussion with the CAC Chairperson and Elections Chair. The report of the Nominations Committee Chairperson had to be amended because it did not comply with the rules of the Constitution and the Procedure Manual. The motion was not constitutional, so the report was to confirm the nominations.

The International President announced that the subject was closed. The report would be submitted to the CAC Chair.

As the time was overrunning, she thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SESSION 5
Thursday March 25, 2021 14:00-16:30 UTC
Chair: Dr. Amany Asfour
BPW International President

Opening Remarks

The International President welcomed everyone and explained that she had just been liaising with the Credentials Chairperson who would be joining the meeting shortly.

The Parliamentarian was putting together a simple slide to explain the process using Zoom for speaking for or against a motion. They were trying to make the General Assembly more inclusive, to ensure the voices were heard of all attendees: they had paid their registration fee and were participating at unusual hours around the world.

The CAC Chairperson had been asked by several members to confirm her understanding regarding the voting session. The Chairperson of the Nominations Committee had not been able to complete her report on 23 March. She was cut off while presenting and because of technical difficulties had been unable to return to the session on the previous day. The General Assembly had to hear the Nominations Committee Report before Delegates voted for Presidents, Executive and Standing Committees. If any new information were presented in that report it could have an interference on how members voted. The voting General Assembly session II was opened at 18:00 UTC on 22 March in advance of the Nominations Committee report being presented. The General Assembly II voting was due to be completed at 23:00 UTC the previous day. An announcement to extend General Assembly session II voting to extend it until 17:00 UTC on 25 March after the Nominations Chairperson had submitted her report had been received at 23:45 UTC, 45 minutes after the deadline. This extension had been added by the International President without the assent of the General Assembly, extending the voting period by another 18 hours.

The Chairperson of the Nominations Committee had been invited to complete her report at this session after the voting for President should have been already closed. It was also not in accordance with the timing of the General Assembly session II which had been approved as indicated in the Agenda, in the Workbook which voting Delegates had approved in the first voting session. Any new substantial information coming to hand meant that a new vote would be necessary.

An inflexible approach to voting sessions did not accommodate potential changes in the business Program, which from experience did not always match the time allocated in the Agenda so this was really not acceptable. She asked for reconsideration of the way the voting sessions were structured.

The International President thanked the CAC Chairperson and invited the Elections Chairperson to show how the voting schedule had been adapted.

The Elections Chairperson confirmed that the voting had been changed as she understood no further announcements regarding voting could be made until such time as the Nominations Chairperson had been able to review and re-submit her report, then come online to speak to it. This was why the voting had been altered, to provide that opportunity for a delay in the process of the voting of The International President

The other problem was that according to the Constitution all these elections were supposed to take place on the last day. Online voting made it a lot more difficult. So as a consequence The International President's vote was to go forward earlier so that the person who had the least amount of votes was given the opportunity to prepare an address if they chose to stand for Vice President. The voting for the remainder of elections would also be conducted on the penultimate session, so that all the election results could be announced on the last day, in accordance with the Constitution, apart from The International President.

The International President confirmed that the new voting schedule would be circulated. She invited the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee to conclude her revised nominations report.

Point of order

The Executive Secretary commented that the meeting required the Credentials Report to see how many people were participating in the session. She also asked if the report had been presented at the previous session as one of her duties was to ensure credential compliance and the filing of relevant General Assembly documentation. However, she had also not yet received the report indicating all the people that have been credentialed for the General Assembly.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan replied that the second Credentials Report had been sent to every voting delegate.

The Executive Secretary was referring particularly to the full Credentials Report listing all the people who had been credentialed.

The International President reassured her that this would be investigated.

Point of information

BPW Malta commented that the extension had been notified after the closure of the voting time allocated which had been announced at the beginning of the General Assembly, meaning that everybody credentialed to vote would have already voted. She did not find it acceptable that the extension was sent after the closing of the voting timeframe without prior notice and secondly she formally requested an audit of the votes submitted at the time of the original closure which was 23:00 hrs. UTC on March 24.

The International President replied that the Elections Committee Chairperson had indicated that this decision had been taken because of the situation surrounding the report of the Nominations Committee. Members had thought that one of the candidates was disqualified so they had not felt it necessary to vote. She had received many calls about that.

The CAC Chairperson pointed out that she had previously advised the meeting that the decision to extend the voting had not received the general assent of the General Assembly. Also, the original voting session had been approved in Voting Session 1 as posted in the Workbook.

The International President informed the General Assembly that many people had complained because they had understood that a candidate had been disqualified so it

created a lot of confusion among the members. So, that was why it was decided the voting session should be extended.

The CAC Chairperson felt that given such complaints and confusion the vote should be disbanded and a new vote instituted, as indicated by BPW Malta.

The International President replied that in view of the confusion and the rumors that had circulated there was only one appropriate candidate. She would refer to the Parliamentarian. Many people thought there was only one candidate and there was no need for voting.

The CAC Chairperson disagreed and felt that other voting Delegates would too.

The three Parliamentarians ruled that the CAC Chairperson was correct: the vote should be disbanded and a new vote taken because one candidate was disadvantaged through the report presented the previous day.

In the light of this, the International President confirmed the vote would be re-run. The Parliamentarian asked for the Parliamentarians to receive a copy of the Credentials Report. As they were not in the voting session they did not have a clear view of the voting numbers and wanted to make sure that there were able to fulfil their duties.

Point of clarification

BPW UK asked how many members of the Executive Committee or the organizing committee had seen the results of that first ballot between 11:00 when the votes had closed and 11:45 when the email was circulated.

The International President replied that the only persons who should see the ballots were the Scrutineers, but in this instance they had not yet been informed of the decision to extend the voting time because of the rumors circulating which had disadvantaged one of the candidates after the report had been sent, indicating that she was not eligible to stand.

BPW UK sought to understand the international President's reply and asked if the only person who saw that result between 11:00 and 11:45 had been the Scrutineer.

The International President replied that nobody had seen the results.

The Elections Chairperson explained that the voting information and results had not been distributed to anybody, including the Scrutineers. Nobody had seen anything as yet. The votes were being held by the company who received the votes and the results would be sent out later that day with the close of vote.

The International President reiterated the ruling from the Parliamentarians that the vote would be annulled and rescheduled according to the Constitution.

The CAC Chairperson asked that all records of the voting which had taken place the day before and was potentially still underway be destroyed and that nobody should see those records – not even the Scrutineers.

The Chief Parliamentarian fully supported that all previous voting be destroyed and no evidence be distributed.

The Elections Chairperson also agreed that the election for the next BPW International President should be re-held.

Point of clarification

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan asked if the votes for all positions should be destroyed or just those relating to the President.

The International President thought the whole batch should be re-done but sought the opinion of the Parliamentarians.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan pointed out that there were numerous items in that one batch of voting. She asked for clarification from the Elections Chairperson as to whether to destroy the Presidential vote or the whole batch of votes.

The Elections Chairperson replied that there had only been one vote in an election so this did not affect the other reports or Resolutions which could be sent to the Scrutineers. The only one affected was the election of the International President which should be deleted along with all information.

She saw no reason to delay that because the reports had been given and all Delegates were present at the time of those reports being given but deferred to the Parliamentarian and/or the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson that that would be the case.

The Parliamentarian agreed that there was only one lot of voting to be destroyed at that moment, otherwise all the others would be held electronically as separate votes with separate reports.

The International President thanked the Parliamentarians, the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson and the Credentials Committee. The decision was that all the information regarding election of the International President would be deleted while the other batch concerning reports and Resolutions would be distributed to the Scrutineers. The Executive Secretary advised the International President that any decisions made by her should not be based on rumors, but on solid reasons.

The Parliamentarian felt this was a personal statement which was unconstitutional, and urged everyone to adhere to the BPW constitution, Rules of Debate and Regulations. It had been agreed in principle that the voting for the International President's candidacy would be destroyed. She had also noted on Facebook that people were mentioning the roles they were standing for on the Executive but these statements had to be removed because this was considered to be campaigning.

The Executive Secretary wanted to ensure that the notes she was taking did not refer to rumors.

The International President replied that the report given in the General Assembly had not been a rumor, it concerned the elimination of a candidate but it had been resolved by the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair, the Parliamentarians and the Credentials Chair.

BPW USA had understood the Executive Secretary had asked multiple times for a copy of the Credentials Report but had not yet received it. She felt that if this were an electronic document it would not be unreasonable to request that whoever had control of that document should email it to the Executive Secretary.

Point of clarification

The Chief Parliamentarian commented that it had been confirmed that every voting Delegate would have received a copy of the Credentials Report. The Executive Secretary required a copy before the meetings but the Parliamentarians did not automatically receive the Report as they did not have a vote, so she reiterated the need for a copy.

The CAC Chairperson had exchanged some correspondence with Past International President Dr. Chanchanok Viravan that morning and felt that they were requesting different things. She had been asking for the electronic roll call to be announced by the Credentials Chairperson or someone else at the beginning of the meeting. It was important to know who was in attendance. The Credentials report would be based on the Credentials forms, as the Executive Secretary had said. This would be a different number to the Roll Call as voting Delegates unfortunately may well not be attending the live meeting but relying on the re-run of each day's session. She did not see why the Parliamentarians could not have all the evidence being circulated to members.

Point of order

BPW Hong Kong had not attended a General Assembly before so asked the International President why the extension of the voting session had not been signed off by the International Board.

The International President deemed the subject closed, following the ruling by the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair.

BPW Hong Kong felt the International Board should have been allowed to vote on the extension.

The International President responded that it was not about the International Board but the General Assembly. It had been a reaction to a candidate being disadvantaged.

BPW Hong Kong asked for the International Board to have a say.

The International President reiterated that there had been a ruling so that was the end of the matter.

BPW Hong Kong was confused as the General Assembly had adopted the Agenda with different timings and had signed off on that Agenda so presumably if there were to be changes, a vote would be necessary.

The International President added that this was the first time such a situation had arisen. Referring to the credentials, the Elections Chairperson asked to clarify with the Parliamentarians and also the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson in the virtual General Assembly Standing Orders A2, "*Credential Chairperson must announce the voting strength for online voting at the General Assembly/ International Board prior to the Call for online voting. Total online voting representation at the General Assembly include eligible voters who are also registered to attend the meetings and already pre-identified themselves electronically (e.g. by e-mail) at least two days prior to the meeting. Eligible voters should have access to attend the meeting and/or view the recording at a set date due to technology timeframe restrictions*".

She had understood from this that it was very hard to say what the voting strength was in the meeting because clearly the Standing Orders allowed those who could not attend to look at the recording later and then vote accordingly. This was why the Credentials Chairperson announces the number of those entitled to vote at any one voting period. She sought the advice of the Parliamentarians and Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair.

The International President added that as at every Congress those who had registered for this virtual Congress were eligible to vote, in addition those who had presented their credential forms. The President's Office had received some credentials without registration for the Congress. So, those were not eligible for the voting.

Responding to the query by the Elections Chair, the CAC Chairperson confirmed her understanding.

Point of order

The Regional Coordinator - Latin America asked for the Executive Secretary to be able to un-mute herself when she needed to say something instead of waiting to be unmuted. She would normally have the right to speak at face to face Congresses and had also apparently been muted while she was speaking.

The International President reminded the Regional Coordinator that the Chairperson of this meeting was the International President not the Executive Secretary. The International President would give the floor to those eligible to speak. According to Standing Orders, those who had already spoken once were not able to speak again: in a Delegation, two members could speak on the same topic.

Nominations Report

The Nominations Chairperson asked how long she would be allocated for this report.

The International President replied that she had 10 minutes.

The Nominations Chairperson said she would continue her report, which may prove controversial but asked for everyone to remain professional. She added that she was the only Chairperson to have had her report interrupted and hoped that would not happen again. The previous day, she had tried to rejoin the meeting for over an hour but the same message appeared repeatedly: *"Unable to re-join. The Host removed you from the meeting"*. Since the previous session, the Nominations Committee had delivered a majority decision requiring her to continue her report unchanged as per the previous session whereby they had voted to disqualify a candidate based on the Procedure Manual. The Delegates could decide if they approved or did not approve this decision. She referred to section 8.3.4 of the Procedure Manual which indicated that the Nominations Committee was responsible for monitoring promotional materials during the General Assembly, therefore they had acted correctly by reporting that they had been informed that the rules under 8.3.4 had been violated. However, any subsequent actions were not shown in the Procedure Manual.

The first transgression had taken place before the start of the General Assembly, in the form of a promotional website which was duly reported to the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson who offered to not disqualify the candidate's nomination if the site was taken down. The second transgression took place during General Assembly and was reported to the Nominations Chair. Again, a candidate cited her candidacy on a website for which she was responsible. She showed an extract from the site which was still live on March 24th. The Nominations Committee Chairperson had received another complaint about a YouTube video, which contravened section 8.3.4 bullet 7 of the Procedure Manual, whereby *"no social media/video campaign of the nominees is allowed"*. She wondered who would have the power to disqualify a candidate for violation of the promotion rules if it was not the Nominations Committee.

She called for nominations from the floor for the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Health.

Nominations from the floor for the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Health

BPW Nigeria nominated Professor Naglaa Lofty , BPW Egypt.

The Nominations Committee Chairperson reminded her that any Affiliate nominating a candidate from the floor must within two hours produce the full documentation required to the Nominations Committee Chairperson, and gave out her email address.

BPW Italy nominated Roberta Chiesa, BPW Italy.

Point of clarification

BPW USA wanted to make sure that the time taken by the nominations from the floor did not count as part of the Nominations Chair's time to give her report.

The International President invited the Nominations Chairperson to continue.

Point of clarification

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich commented that since not all Affiliates were present at the Zoom meeting some would miss the 2-hour slot for nominations from the floor. For fairness, she suggested that the President's Office should notify all Affiliates of the vacancy for the Chairperson of the Standing committee on health and give everyone two hours to submit nominations.

The Nominations Chairperson agreed with this in principle but asked for the Parliamentarians to rule.

The Chief Parliamentarian stated that nominations could be called from the floor and as the sessions were being recorded, due respect should be shown for everyone unable to participate. There would be a formal complaint issued to the Nominations Committee concerning another nominee who had been campaigning before the elections.

The Nominations Chairperson had also received a screenshot in that regard and would be happy to investigate it on receipt of a legible version or link.

BPW Nigeria asked whether the 2 hours would be counted from this point or from the end of the meeting.

The Nominations Chairperson replied that according to the Procedure Manual, the time was counted from the time of nomination from the floor.

BPW Nigeria asked for this to be reconsidered as the meeting itself would be continuing beyond the 2-hour deadline.

The Elections Chairperson referred the meeting back to the Virtual General Assembly Standing Orders A "Voting" bullet point 2: *"Eligible voters should have access to attend the meeting and/or view it [sic] recordings at a set date due to technology/timeframe restrictions."* This related to those who were not in the meeting that evening so she assumed that when they watched the re-run they would then be able to vote or to act on whatever had come up in that General Assembly session. She sought clarification from the Parliamentarian as to whether that meant sending out a call for the nominations and then allowing two hours after the General Assembly had closed.

The Chief Parliamentarian referred back to section 8.3.4 of the Procedure Manual: *"Affiliates who nominate a candidate from the floor must within two (2) hours produce the full documentation required of the Nominee to the Nominations Committee Chairperson"*.

The Nominations Chairperson announced that nominations from the floor would be called again at the next session of the General Assembly for those Affiliates unable to be present at this session.

As a point of personal privilege, she proceeded to thank her committee for their service: Dr. Yasmin Darwich from Latin America, Maria José Mainar from Europe, Ira Prasai from Asia Pacific and Bertiller Mongella from Africa. She concluded her report.

Point of clarification

The Chief Parliamentarian recognized that this part of the meeting had ended but asked to show a PowerPoint on behalf of all the Parliamentarians, whom she acknowledged: Carla Laura Petruzzelli (BPW Italy) and Ojobo Ode Atuluku (BPW Nigeria). She then read out the proceedings for the General Assembly Rules of Debate, as voted and approved by the Delegates of the General Assembly.

She began by describing how to use the Zoom system for online debate, explaining that the speaking order would alternate between “for” and “against” and reading out Standing Orders Section C “Motions, resolutions and amendments to the constitution and regulations”: *“No one may speak more than once for a motion and no Delegation may speak more than twice. To ensure a fair and democratic process with the online meeting process, those who have not had the opportunity to speak to a prior motion will be provided first opportunity to speak, (in respect to for or against the motion)”*.

According to para 5 of the introduction to Standing Orders *“The Standing Orders are designed to provide for constructive and democratic meetings to help, not hinder, the business of the meeting. ‘Undue strictness’ should never be allowed to intimidate members or limit full participation”*.

“A) Voting electronically – formal change to Rules of Debate/ Standing Orders.

1. *Voting Delegates, members of the Executive, Chairpersons of Standing Committees and Past Presidents of BPW International may vote online. These are referred to as “Voting Members”*
2. *Credential Chairperson must announce the voting strength for online voting of the General Assembly/ International Board prior to the Call for online voting. Total online voting representation at the General Assembly includes eligible voters who are also registered to attend meetings and already pre-identified themselves electronically, (e.g. by e-mail) at least two days prior to the meeting. Eligible voters should have access to attend the meeting and/or view its recordings at a set date due to technology/ timeframe restrictions”*.

To conclude, she reminded participants to show respect to all attendees during the Congress.

Additional candidates for the position of Chairperson of the Standing Health Committee

- Marta Solimano, BPW Argentina
- Diane Glenn, BPW New Zealand

The International President closed the call for nominations from the floor but invited those not present to submit further names to the President’s Office.

Highlights from the Reports of the Taskforces, as published on pages 49-66 of the Workbook

The International President reminded the audience that there were 15 very active Taskforces.

1. Archive, chaired by Dr. Catherine Bosshart, Vice President – UN

To date, the archives of BPW International until 2008 had been deposited in Atria, the [Institute of Gender Equality and Women's History](#) in Amsterdam, complete with documents and photographs.

2. Art for Peace and Intercultural Understanding, chaired by Elisa Campos (BPW Brazil)

The main objective of this Taskforce was to establish a culture of peace by increasing and refining good human relations among BPW members.

3. BPW Power to Make a Difference, chaired by Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan, BPW Thailand

The objective was to document and give recognition to the values of leadership, influence and work of BPW Affiliates. The BPW Power to Make a Difference competition expanded the scope of eligible BPW projects from the original “Beyond 2000: helping women help themselves” competition founded in 1997.

4. International Charter of Girls’ Rights, chaired by Pinella Bombaci, Regional Coordinator - Europe.

The original form of the Charte was approved during 1997 by BPW Europe Congress and following a seminar advocated by Janice Bancroft who was the then National President of BPW UK. The Charter was a unique document in history for gender, culture and documenting the dramatic condition of women, presented in Beijing at the World Conference of Women 1995, inspired by the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Charter was aligned with BPW advocacy pillars with reference to education and STEM education for young girls and children.

5. Prevention of Child Marriage, chaired by Executive Finance Officer Giuseppina Seidita, BPW Italy.

Child marriage was recognized as a serious violation of human rights as per SDG5, target 5.3 as well as SDG4. Statistics had shown that a girl under age of 18 was being married every three seconds. That represented ten million underage girls each year, most often without their consent, most likely to an older man. This was a major problem worldwide, so this Taskforce worked to raise awareness among BPW Affiliates so they could advocate for better legislation to prevent child marriage and change culture and traditions.

6. Equal Pay, chaired by Dr. Bettina Schleicher, BPW Germany

BPW Affiliates across the world had been running annual Equal Pay Day campaigns since 2009. The Taskforce had convinced numerous member countries to join the campaign and implement equal pay. Since the beginning of the campaign more than 35 countries had introduced Equal Pay Days. The International President added that she had attended many Equal Pay Day campaign even at CSW in New York, where the Taskforce had convened several side events to promote this.

7. Health and Wellbeing, chaired by Luisa Monini, BPW Italy

There was a full report with the theme “think globally and act locally” from humanist René Dubos. This fitted well with the philosophy of BPW International with Affiliates thinking globally yet acting locally depending upon the needs of the people. The Taskforce

had developed a three-year Health and Wellbeing Action Plan aligned with the 17 UN SDGs to be achieved by 2030. In the COVID era, the Taskforce had also published a report on the pandemic, featuring contributions from several BPW Affiliates.

8. International Anti-Human Trafficking, chaired by Kelly Tallon Franklin, BPW Canada

Together with BPW Ontario, BPW Canada had created the historic Anti-Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation Awareness Movement which had stopped highway traffic to focus attention on a 16-year-old survivor, asking for the media to stop victimizing and criminalizing those caught in the exploitation, coercion and crime, to work on prevention and resources for survivors.

9. International Legal Advice, chaired by Eufemia Ippolito, BPW Italy.

This Taskforce, in operation since 2017, comprised members from each BPW Region. They had studied the BPW International Constitution, the Procedure Manual and the Regulations to assess their compatibility with International Law. Having compared the Guidelines of the Regional Coordinators, their conclusions were:

1. The Guidelines did not have the same legal basis required by the Constitution
2. The Guidelines did not have the same general rules required for alignment
3. A standard template for Regional Guidelines was required so that the Guidelines were consistent for all Regional Coordinators.

10. Leadership and Lifelong Learning Taskforce chaired by Past International President Dr. Antoinette Rüegg, BPW Switzerland

This term had seen the development of the 2014 - 2021 Pilot system. The core of this Pilot was to establish and test digital tools with the unique potential and expertise of the members of BPW's worldwide network and showed the performance of BPW at all levels in a sustainable manner. There were three tools which had all proven successful: "Member Projects", "Collection of Titles of club and federation projects" and "Experts".

11. Mentoring, chaired by Dr. Carla Laura Petruzelli, BPW Italy

This Taskforce had delivered many programs. BPW Europe had a fund with a balance of €700 for mentoring but this money was not available to the International Taskforce. To overcome the COVID challenge, the Taskforce members had held many conference calls and meetings, particularly with Géraldine Crevat (BPW France), leader of the International Mobility Member Project. Many Federations had participated, including BPW Canada, USA, France, Switzerland, Nepal, Turkey, Spain and Austria. There was also a Facebook page on the BPW International Mentoring Program.

12. Women in Science and Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Innovation chaired by Tess Mateo BPW USA

The aim was to encourage girls to actively participate in an ever-changing complex world solving problems, making sense of information and knowing how to gather and evaluate evidence to make decisions in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Many BPW Affiliates were promoting STEM education for young girls as it lay at the heart of the organization: working to have an impact on the daily lives of our women and youth.

13. International Twinning chaired by Nellina Basile, BPW Italy

The aim of the Twinning Taskforce was to put women from different clubs in different nations in touch with each other to improve their knowledge of each other's country, to exchange ideas, experiences and opportunities. Working with the BPW International Triennium theme of "Empowering women to realize the SDGs", the Taskforce managed many twinning initiatives around the world, such as BPW Thessaloniki, Greece with BPW Larnaka-Famagusta, Cyprus and BPW Wellington, New Zealand with Hong Kong, China.

14. Women on Boards, chaired by Agnès Bricard, BPW France

Many Affiliates were working on promoting women onto boards or into high-level corporate positions. Twenty-nine countries across the world had set quotas to achieve this. This Taskforce had put BPW France and the issue of Women on Boards in the spotlight during a major documentary by French television, in a popular prime time show called "Cash Investigation". This highlighted the pioneering role of BPW regarding the lack of women on boards and as CEOs of large companies. Subsequently, BPW Paris had launched a series of 20 cartoons entitled "Women on Boards" and had contributed to the guidebook on Diversity on Boards produced by the Federation of Female Managers.

15. Women Migrants and Global Citizenship, chaired by Jenny Gulamani-Abdulla, BPW Canada.

This Taskforce was the first of its kind to create an inclusive approach to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Migrant women must be considered one of the vulnerable groups of women who had been left behind with regard to the economic empowerment of women realizing the SDGs.

The International President encouraged everyone to read the full reports of the Taskforces on pages 49-66 of the Workbook because they represented the soul and the spirit of the BPW International core objectives for empowering women and realizing the Sustainable Development Goals. She acknowledged the Chairs of the Taskforces who had worked so hard to compile data, promote the campaigns, and publicize the real objectives of BPW International.

The International President moved the reports *as a whole*. This was seconded by Past International President Freda Miriklis and Executive Finance Officer Giuseppina Seidita. Past International President Freda Miriklis congratulated the International President and the Taskforce Chairs and members who had worked so diligently during the triennium.

Presentations by Candidates for Standing Committee Chairs Agriculture and Nutrition Standing Committee

Cristina Gorajski Visconti, BPW Italy was the founder, secretary and Past President of BPW Ancona Riviera del Conero since 1988. She was an active Board member, working as BPW Representative at the FAO in Rome since 2008 where she presented papers in Italy and abroad and attended BPW International Congress and CSW New York until 2018.

She wanted to offer her experience to boost BPW work in agriculture and nutrition connected with women's empowerment. The Standing Committee for Agriculture collected the best efforts of national Federations and helped circulate information on different issues in alignment with BPW International's objectives. It also helped with the presentation of international projects.

The creation of the Committee for Agriculture and Nutrition as a core Standing Committee in BPW International provided the platform needed to better face the issues on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. BPW was seen as an extensive network of active members, a true experience on long-term lobby work that was successfully expressed at local level among entrepreneurs, technical and professional experts who could provide useful input on supporting and implementing voluntary guidelines on food security and rural development.

Working together with other similar organizations, proposals could be drafted to include the main political demands of the civil society for the benefit of women, men and communities in general. We have to act during the present decade of [Action on Nutrition](#). Strategic frameworks were necessary for preparatory work, technological support and to capture ideas. This Standing Committee could be the right tool to do this.

Arts and Culture Standing Committee

Sher Singh, BPW USA

Sher had been involved with the California, New York and National BPW for at least three years. She was engrossed in culture, having been a dancer throughout her life. She had opened several cultural programs within New York State where she had also been Head of a Cultural Diversity summit in different programs

She had a great passion for art, music and dance. Coming from a very multicultural background (Hindu, Muslim and Catholic), she had been exposed to many cultures and had travelled over world.

Sher believed strongly in BPW and there was much that could be communicated through art, music and dance and all other art forms.

Business, Trade and Technology Standing Committee

Of the three original candidates, one (Manjul Batra, BPW USA) had withdrawn.

Paz Martín Lozano, BPW Dominican Republic

Having studied economic financial management and financial and foreign trade, Paz had worked as International Trade Advisor for several multinational companies. Her objective was to gather details of BPW members in the business sector, to create a directory for different sectors and promote business linkage among them using e-commerce and e-marketing.

Her plan of action was to strengthen BPW relations with institutions to build capacity among BPW members in trade and help provide them with market access. She also wanted to forge partnerships with multinational companies to source their purchases from BPW members.

Her objective was to channel information to BPW members regarding access to market, trade agreements and finance. The sustainability of BPW International was dependent on its use of new technology. Her plan was to promote the products and services of BPW members, and offer training programs to train members in the use of new technologies to promote their goods and services.

Paz stood ready to serve BPW members, to advocate for good laws and better opportunities, create new opportunities by clustering their products and services and promote them among BPW members and international and regional markets.

Christine Walwyn, BPW St Kitts

With a PhD in international business, Christine was President of Walwyn Consulting and a senior lecturer at the St Kitts College. She had worked as a consultant for the OAS, the EU, UN Women and the World Bank while also being involved with sports management as a FIFA Marketing Developing Officer and for the St Kitts and Nevis Olympic Committee. Her involvement with BPW had started in 2013 when BPW St Kitts was revived and she was elected to the post of Second Vice President. Two years later, she became President and during her tenure, BPW St Kitts introduced a “Women’s Wellness Campaign” to encourage cervical and breast cancer testing. This project had received high accolades locally and came second in the “BPW Power to Make a Difference Awards” at Cairo Congress in 2017.

Since 2014, Christine had attended the annual Leaders’ Summit in New York and sessions at CSW in 2019. She treasured her experiences from the BPW International Congresses in Jeju and Egypt.

If elected to this position, she would focus on Sustainable Development Goal number 9 for Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. Working with her committee, the vision would be to connect BPW through an innovative conference and expo designed especially for SMEs to showcase digital trends with e-commerce. Working with the mantra “Girls Compete, Women Empower”, she firmly believed it would be possible to bind together in a transformational process to create a better and more equitable world for all women and girls.

Development, Training and Employment Standing Committee

Francesca Burack, BPW USA

Francesca Burack, BPW USA was CEO of Fearless Talent Development, training women on empowerment, leadership and communication. She believed in leading from the heart and that no woman should be left behind.

These were challenging and disruptive times that required strength and unity from everyone, to move into a dynamic future, centered around technology, global cooperation and resiliency. It was only by uplifting and supporting one another that women would enter this era from a position of strength. This was why teambuilding and collaborative working environments were so important, and that would be how the Development, Training and Employment Standing Committee would operate.

As an expert in human potential she had successfully trained thousands of women around the world to stand in their power and take fearless action with pride and conviction. This took courage, but courage and fearlessness could be learned. Francesca had helped create the Equal Pay Coalition in New York City which was now 100 organizations-strong, including male allies. They had successfully ensured many laws had been passed to improve the lives of women at work and at home.

In 2017, she had published a book entitled “Women are Special: 123 Reasons Why”. Over the years, BPW had provided her with many opportunities such as being a UN representative. She was also the Immediate Past President of the New York City Affiliate

which boasted a culturally diverse Executive, with 50% of our members being Young BPW. The best opportunity was belonging to this worldwide sisterhood.

She wanted the opportunity to help BPW sisters around the world recover from COVID in the best position ever. The role fitted together with her expertise, skills and vision.

Nasreen Mahdi, BPW Pakistan

Nasreen Mahdi had been President of BPW Pakistan since 2017, having joined BPW in 1990 and having worked in local clubs as President and Projects Chair. Subsequently, at national level she had held positions of Treasurer, Vice President and Senior Vice President. She was currently also one of the Sub-regional Coordinator of Asia Pacific and had overseen BPW projects from a planning to an implementation stage.

She had established numerous schools with the emphasis on STEM education, also medical clinics and legal aid centers while also working in women's hostels, retired women's homes and vocational centers.

Nasreen was also managing BPW Women's Complexes in 4 cities in Pakistan, which were acting as the center points for all BPW activities, and had established a BPW village where 66 houses had been built for widows and other needy women, along with a school for children and an industrial home for girls.

She had organized a number of seminars, symposia, workshops and conferences and had also attended national and international Congresses. If elected to the position of Chairperson of the Standing Committee she wanted to establish a virtual training center and use the expertise of our BPW members in different fields as trainers. So members would be trained by other BPW members in collaboration with the Vice President – Membership and Vice President – UN, designing and running training workshops online.

With her extensive experience in development, training and employment Nasreen particularly wanted to train Young BPW members on how to help women victims of violence and harassment, how to interact with government agencies, how to select and prepare a directory of BPW experts and how to link with external partners to promote employment and development.

Environment & Sustainable Development Standing Committee

Laurie Dameron, BPW USA

Laurie had been a member BPW Boulder Colorado in the USA since around 2007. At their conference in 2015 she had pointed out that women's issues would not matter unless the world tackled climate change, so she was promptly elected Chairperson of Environmental of Sustainable Development for BPW Colorado.

One of her first actions had been to convince BPW chapters to commit to running zero waste events: zero waste meant reduce, re-use, recycle. The Environmental Protection Agency in the USA stated that over 40% of greenhouse gases came from the way products were extracted from the earth, produced, transported and eliminated. This all required energy so striving for zero waste was one of the easiest and quickest ways to fight climate change.

As Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Environment & Sustainable Development, she planned to look at existing projects, for example where cities in Europe and beyond were offering water stations with filtered water so that people could refill their water bottles instead of using plastic bottled water.

Laurie was very passionate and dedicated. Everyone's futures were at stake but there were so many simple, easily achievable actions to do every day to fight climate change.

Angela Donato, BPW Italy

Angela had been a member of BPW Soverato club in Italy since 2011 and BPW had become a big part of her life. Having studied business and administration for tourism in Florence, in 1998 she established the company Solutions for Marketing & Technical Service, working in the Middle East. In 2001, she opened a tour operator in Italy, giving her the opportunity to travel all over the world and to establish strong relationships in different countries. She had been developing a project in Italy for sustainable tourism and strongly believed that the future was green and people must learn more from the planet to keep it alive.

Legislation Standing Committee

Naheed Ahmed, BPW Pakistan

Naheed was a Master in Economics and a lawyer, having started practicing law and social work in 1980, working with 22 federal government departments since 1991 under the Federal Ministry of law and justice in Pakistan. She had also been the legal advisor for BPW Pakistan since 2001, handling all legal and constitutional issues and coordination with BPW branches under the guidance and supervision of Federation President Nasreen Mahdi.

For four years she had served as Chairperson of the Women Crisis Centre under the Ministry of Women Development for women's centers, resolving women's issues, helping women in distress with their legal problems, and court cases with police. She had also been involved with the following international organizations since 1980: Lions Clubs International, Alliance Clubs International, Red Cross, All Pakistan Women's Association and the Soroptimists.

Stella Kammiti, BPW Cyprus

Stella Kammiti was a legal advisor and advocate for over 27 years with much experience in international, corporate and banking law as well commercial and trust law. Over the years, she had been asked on many occasions to advise clients on international laws and regulations as well as international conventions. She had also served on the Board of various public and private companies and associations. This experience had shown her that the main key to success was teamwork.

Currently the Chairperson of the Housing and Finance Corporation, she was appointed to that position by the Council of Ministers in 2016, having been nominated by BPW Cyprus.

Her term would expire shortly. She was also the Chairwoman of STEP Cyprus and the Chairperson of the Cyprus Women's Lobby for over two years. However, the most important position was Chairperson of the Committee of Legal Affairs of BPW Cyprus, a

position she had held for over 5 years and during the term, one of the main achievements was to amend the constitutions of BPW Cyprus and also of the local BPWs with the valuable assistance of President Mary Papadopoulou.

This change was very important because the terms of these constitutions had to be brought in line with an amended law in Cyprus regarding associations, and also to align with BPW International Constitutional Regulations, European Guidelines and the BPW Procedure Manual.

She had frequently lobbied draft bills before parliament, ministers and political parties.

Her main target would be to gather the concerns from the various jurisdictions of BPW and make a target plan to achieve what was required to protect the rights and interests of women. It was important to develop a very strong collaboration and network in order to achieve the organization's targets.

Standing Committee on Projects

Caterina Reda, BPW Italy

A member of BPW Italy since 2000, Caterina was a professor of English at the University of Magna Grecia in Catanzaro. She had been part of an international Mentoring Taskforce since 2014 and had also participated at the BPW Europe Conferences in Zurich and in Galway, where she presented the Program and at International Congress in Cairo.

At international level she had run a pilot project called "Living Together and Helping Each Other", based on tourism and sustainability aligned with Agenda 2030. This had paused due to COVID-19.

Since 2019, at the request of the President of BPW Italy she had handled communications between the BPW International Board and the Board of BPW Italy.

She had participated in almost all international online meetings organized by Géraldine Crevat (BPW France), sharing the same frustrating feelings of lockdown for months with other BPW members.

She was standing as Chairperson of Projects because she had run projects throughout her career, and was a member of the European Project Commission. Caterina also ran the Erasmus Project for motilities for teachers and students at her university.

She planned to implement digital systems as the means of communication for BPW. The pandemic had demonstrated that people could easily work from home and be in communication with colleagues around the world, avoiding travel expenses and saving time for our jobs and families.

She appreciated the International President's message for the Candle lighting Ceremony, emphasizing the key words of peace, hope and resilience. Women had to keep fighting for their rights and conviction was needed among members in supporting BPW values as their mission.

Naphaphen Vejjajiva (Dion), BPW Thailand

Dion was a Bachelor of Science in Management and Master in Economics. She had been a member of BPW Bangkok since 1996 and was currently Vice President of BPW Bangkok, the International Relations Chairperson for BPW Thailand and Communications Admin for this triennium. When Dr. Nok Viravan was BPW International President, Dion had been the Director of the President's Office and had also served as UN ESCAP Representative and Projects Chairperson for BPW International.

Greatly enjoying projects, her outstanding achievement was the ongoing 15-year Give Women a Second Chance project, which had won first place in the Action award of the BPW International Power to Make a Difference Competition in 2008. This had helped 23,000 women in prison by providing professional training, education and self-esteem training so they were equipped to re-enter society and lead a normal life.

Her second project was the Self Defense Training which helped women to train women in the workplace and college students, as she believed protection was better than rehabilitation because victims were hurt, injured or killed.

Dion had also helped initiate fundraising for BPW Nepal during the earthquake crisis. As Projects Chairperson she would make BPW Projects more visible and more aligned with the SDGs while encouraging twinning projects among BPW Affiliates.

Public Relations Standing Committee**Stephanie Falzon BPW Malta**

Stephanie was the Immediate Past President of BPW Malta and currently the Chairperson of [emPOWER](#), a platform in Malta for all the major female NGOs, including the National Council of Women, the Soroptimists and BPW.

Branding and public relations were very important and all clubs should be shown how to brand and how to promote their club in a professional way to encourage more people to join. Once the brand was in place, it would attract more funding through sponsors, and this would allow projects to run. Branding BPW was really not very expensive, and it had been achieved in Malta, where over the previous 10 years BPW had become one of the biggest female NGOs in Malta. This had started with Anna Mercieca, founder President of BPW Malta, followed by Stephanie and was now continuing under the current President. They continued to promote BPW as a brand. PR was the way to present the organization correctly. This had been achieved in Malta and she looked forward to doing this at international level.

Silvia Vigatà González, BPW Spain.

Silvia had graduated from St Louis University Missouri and was a business woman, starting in 2007 when her company was recognized for its innovation by BPW Lerida, her local club. She was now President of BPW Spain.

As Chairperson of the Public Relations committee, the most important task would be to regain the trust and enthusiasm of BPW members, especially young members. But BPW's mature members should not be overlooked because they were the pillars of the organization, the foundation on which the organization's knowledge was based.

To be considered the world's most important women's organization, other international NGOs had to know that BPW International existed so she would help to re-establish all lost contacts. It was important to recover the meaning of the phrase "BPW represents the voice of women in the economy". To achieve this, members should be inspired in the pursuit of a linked single goal: gender equality. As the Public Relations Chairperson she would help to position BPW International on the media map as she did with BPW Spain.

BPW Spain was one of the most active federations in social media. Their last Equal Pay Day campaign, "Neither more nor less, just equal", ("ni más, ni menos, igual") had been a complete success. She would start her role with this great challenge and others would emerge.

Dana Marcela Sas, BPW Arad, Romania

Dana had a Master's Degree in Mechanical Engineering, and in Business Administration. She had been a member of BPW Arad Romania since 2000 and President of that club since 2016, helping to empower women. Throughout 2021 she had tried to represent BPW nationally and internationally, helping increase visibility of the club in the world, contributing to the development of relationships with other clubs in Europe and advocating for more women in all areas of public life. She had attended European Conferences and used her French, Italian and English to establish contact with members from other clubs in Europe.

She had been a member of two BPW International Projects Taskforces in Germany. As an optimistic person, she believed she had the communication and leadership skills necessary for coordinating projects, especially in Public Relations.

The International President thanked all candidates and wished them the best of luck. Huguette Dossa, BPW Benin greeted all the Congress participants and was pleased to see that the organization was continuing with the hard work of so many members. She conveyed her best regards to the International President and all BPW members, all Past International Presidents and all members seeking to stand for office. The International President pointed out that there was little time left for this session of the General Assembly so asked the Resolutions Chairperson to carefully monitor the time.

External Resolutions

The Resolutions Chairperson checked the timings with the Parliamentarians because Movers had been told they had 3 minutes and Seconders 2 minutes to speak. This would total 25 minutes if everyone spoke promptly. So the time would be very tight. As in the previous session, there would be no debate on these Resolutions.

2020-06 – Gender Equality in Sport – BPW New Zealand

The Past President of BPW New Zealand moved this Resolution, explaining that women played and administered sport worldwide. But women were not represented equally in the media or in the management of sport and the situation had to change. To meet the SDGs nobody could be left behind so women could not be left behind in sport.

The Secunder was Vice President of BPW Australia who echoed the words of the Mover and added that the Resolution was about the importance of a living wage for sportswomen around the world and for them to be treated equally. There were examples

of where this could be successful, such as cricket Australia in the T20 World Cup which had seen 84,000 fans in a stadium for the grand final of the women's cricket. So, this had shown that when people came together and supported events in viewership, the profiles of sportswomen could be raised enormously.

The Resolutions Chairperson announced that this concluded the presentation of External Resolution 2020-06 and it would be taken forward for web-based voting.

2020-07 - Skills Development for Migrant Women and Recognition of their Foreign credentials

The proposer was BPW International President Dr. Amany Asfour, who explained that migrant women were considered to be one of the vulnerable groups of women left behind when it comes to economic empowerment and realizing the SDGs. Implementation of the SDGs required an inclusive approach, recognizing that protecting the rights of immigrant women would advance their potential to become agents of development. Studies had shown that an increasing proportion of women were economic or labor migrants. Not only did women spend their incomes in the host countries but they also sent remittances to their home countries which were used for education, health, and community development. In fact, studies showed that migrant women remitted a higher proportion of their salary than migrant men. A key economic and employment barrier faced by migrants remained a lack of recognition of international credentials and experience. Businesses were feeling the effects of labor shortages around the world and the proposed Resolution reflected the growing urgency to find solutions. However, there was a lack of understanding of the skills and credentials of internationally-trained professions. There was a need for credible and trusted sources to ensure that qualifications of an internationally educated candidate were assessed adequately. There was a misperception that not developing or acquiring core skills in the host country represented a liability. Foreign study and work experience were not necessarily considered an asset especially in a host country focused on formal academic credentials and professional licenses, rather than a skills-based approach to hiring. In fact, leaders, key influencers and cross-sector collaboration were needed to create a systemic change. All BPW members had a role to play in leading discussions around diversity, inclusion and recognition.

This was seconded by the President of BPW Canada, who reiterated that this Resolution was

about the inclusion of migrant women in places of work. Migrant women had been one of the marginalized groups, struggling to feel economically empowered. Investing in skills development would allow society to benefit from their true potential. COVID-19 had shown migrant women at the front lines. Their education and training was, and should continue to be, recognized globally.

The Resolutions Chairperson said that this Resolution 2020-07 would now move for voting on the web-based platform.

Resolution 2020-08 - Access for Rural Women to Technology,

A friendly amendment by BPW Canada had been accepted by the mover BPW New Zealand and the Seconder, BPW Benin.

BPW New Zealand explained that when this Resolution had been submitted, the world was different and rural women did not have equal access to the digital technology. Since then, this inequity had been magnified and it was beyond time to ensure that no woman was left behind.

Many nations were centralizing or privatizing their services and moving to digital platforms. In New Zealand, for example, the banks were phasing out checks and closing high-street branches. Health services were moving to tele-health and during the pandemic lockdown, children were expected to continue learning from online platforms. Also in New Zealand, only 50% of the country had cellular telephony coverage and there were many people unable to access online services at home because they did not have internet at their house. This meant in the first sovereign nation where women won the right to vote that rural communities where women were the backbone were being left behind. To meet all the SDGs nobody could be left behind, least of all women and to empower women meant including all women, including indigenous women and those living in remote communities so it was necessary to advocate for technology for all. To empower rural women BPW members should urge their governments around the world to ensure rural communities had good, reliable digital connections.

The Seconder, BPW Benin explained that in her West African country, agriculture was the first source of income. About 70% of women lived in rural areas working on small farms to produce and process food and other crops and the work was mainly manual. Women producers were starting to use phones to advertise their produce. Access to technology had led to improvements in living conditions but rural women in Benin had a long way to go with regards to the use of technology and the internet and social networks were frequently inaccessible. There was a need for governments to work on making digital technology more accessible.

This External Resolution was moved to the digital platform for voting.

External Resolution 2020-09 “To support Governments to Develop a Biodiversity Strategy”

The Proposer, BPW New Zealand described how one fifth of all countries in the world were under threat of ecosystem collapse as biodiversity continued to be eroded.

A [recent report](#) published by insurance firm Swiss Re had revealed that with over half the global gross domestic product dependent on high-functioning biodiversity, from water security to regulating air quality, analysts were warning about the enormous loss that the world would face if no action were taken. The report compiled index-based scientific data mapping the state of the 10 primary ecosystems services and the aggregated data was provided at a resolution of 1 kilometre squared across the world's land. Among the services factored into the index were clean water, our air, pollution, food provision, timber, arable soil, coastal protection, erosion control and habitat intactness. All of these were vital to ensure the healthy sustainability of communities. It also underpinned the global economy with over 55% of global GDP equivalent to USD41.7 trillion dependents on biodiversity and eco-existence services. A staggering fifth of countries globally, 20%, were now at risk of their eco-systems collapsing due to biodiversity and wildlife loss. While major economies across the world, including south-east Asia, USA and Europe were all exposed to biodiversity and eco-system decline, 39 countries were flagged for having more than one third of their land already eroded. Ranking lowest on the index include BPW Affiliate countries: Malta, Israel, Cyprus, Bahrain and Kurdistan.

Strangely, under international law, states had no enforceable obligation to protect the natural environment either domestically or globally. They could choose to do so but they were not legally required, so clearly there was a need to assess the state of ecosystems so that the global community could minimize further negative impact on communities across the world. She concluded with the Maori proverb, translated as “The challenge has been laid down”.

The Seconder was Regional Coordinator – Latin America who reiterated that whatever BPW did would be useless if there was no world of women to help. Latin America was the world's largest natural reserve of biodiversity and BPW Latin America was implementing a regional project born in BPW Brazil entitled "Water ambassadors". Only when members proposed solutions and acted on them could they understand the gravity of climate change and the need to support this Resolution. Ecuador was a boutique of this biodiversity and a signatory country of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Poor environmental education was one of the main issues in this matter and therefore BPW's involvement should concentrate on that too.

This Resolution would now go forward for web-based voting.

2020-10 "Alternatives to Detention for Women and Girls"

BPW New Zealand 2.25.36

The Proposer, BPW New Zealand cited a statement by the New Zealand Justice Minister: *"It is inappropriate for women in prison to be treated as if their needs were the same as male prisoners"*. This was in response to a recent report detailing the degrading and inhumane treatment of two women in one of the country's women's prisons.

Women represented less than 10% of national prison populations globally but prisons were established and operated for men without recognizing the different needs of women.

The Bangkok Rules had focused on keeping women out of prison by providing gender-sensitive alternatives to custodial sentences. The Rules required that women in prison be provided with appropriate health care, were treated humanely, were given dignity during searches, were protected from violence, and that the children of prisoners were provided for.

This Resolution emphasized the first part of those Rules in seeking alternatives to detention. Alternatives could include bail, seizure of travel documents, periodic reporting to the police, electronic monitoring and curfew. Courts could impart fines, community service orders or restorative justice.

The global rate of women incarcerations was climbing at an alarming rate. Women were typically convicted of low-level nonviolent crime such as being disproportionately impacted by punitive drug policies. Women who received prison sentences were often from socially-deprived backgrounds and could be in prison for just a few weeks. They were frequently imprisoned for different reasons to male prisoners. Their crimes were often petty, resulting from an accumulation of traffic offences and fines, some for drink driving or under the influence of drugs. They were frequently unable to pay fines because they were unemployed, did not have a home or lived in a household relationship with little or no control over finances. Women in prison were far more likely to harm themselves and suffer mental health challenges. Children were often denied access to their mothers with maternal care interrupted so that family relationships broke down. Around the world, indigenous populations were disproportionately impacted and in New Zealand women detainees were far more likely to be Maori. Maori women made up approximately 2 – 14% of the total population within women's prisons: 65% of the detainees were Maori. The Sustainable Development Goals were committed to leaving no one behind and BPW must make a difference with this vulnerable group.

In seconding this Resolution, Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan described how Thailand's Princess Bajrakitiyabha had worked with the UN and advocated to initiate the Bangkok Rules. In the past 15 years, BPW Bangkok had been working with the women's prisons, offering training support. The training was not only for them to have a career outside after their sentence but while they were in prison they could earn a living and start saving some money. This gave them initial funding and the skills to support themselves financially, which was important as having a prison sentence would restrict their access to the job market.

The Resolutions Chairperson thanked all the Movers and Seconders and confirmed these Resolutions would now go to voting, with all the resulting actions by Affiliates.

The International President resumed the chair.

Point of order

Past International President Yasmin Darwich referred to having received the Congress Program in the middle of the first session and asked to raise a point of order formally in writing to the Parliamentarians and the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson about the scheduled time on the Agenda for the Congress Proceedings, which should have been presented on the first day but it had been moved to the following day for presentation by the Past Executive Secretary. It was normally the Immediate Past President who presented the Congress proceedings, so she asked for this issue to be considered.

The Parliamentarian replied that she had contacted the International President and the President's Office to inform them that the Immediate Past International President would be presenting her report. As at previous Congresses, according to their Proceedings and Agendas the IPP was not scheduled to speak on the first day.

The International President sought to close the session but invited the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee to speak.

The Chairperson of the Nominations Committee reminded those candidates who had been nominated from the floor for the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Health to submit their applications quickly to allow them to be considered.

BPW Benin apologized for the internet interruptions which had prevented her from completing her speech during the Resolutions session.

As the Financial Reporting was scheduled for the next session, the First Vice President - Membership reminded the Executive Finance Officer that there had been a request for her reporting to include actuals versus budget for this triennium.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson pointed out that the Nominations Committee Chairperson had asked for the papers for any Health Committee nominations to be sent to her but they also had to be sent to the President's Office and to the Executive Secretary.

Credentials Report for the session of 24 March 2021

Of the 168 persons who had attended the previous General Assembly session, there were 151 Delegates and 66 Observers.

The Credentials Chairperson reported on the previous session as she did not yet have the attendance figures for today's session.

The International President closed the meeting.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION 6

Friday 26 March 2021

Chair: Dr. Amany Asfour

BPW International President

Opening Remarks

The international President welcomed everyone to the continuing sessions of the first ever virtual international BPW International General Assembly. She trusted that this would be a productive and very constructive session, full of BPW spirit and run according to the time schedule. The timekeeper would keep everyone to their times and the Parliamentarians would ensure compliance with the procedures and the Standing Orders.

The session's Agenda included the report of Immediate Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich, the Cairo Congress Proceedings, the Disaster Relief Campaign, and a discussion about future international Congresses.

Report from the Elections Committee

There were some initial problems viewing the presentation by the Chairperson of the Elections Committee.

Report by the Chairperson of the Elections Committee

Voting results

The Quorum was 56 and the voting Strength 169

GA 7			
Regional Coordinator Reports			
In favor	Against	Abstentions	Total votes verified
149	9	0	158
These reports were accepted			
GA9			
Internal Resolution 2020-14 Cessation of Annual Increase in Membership Dues:			
In favor	Against	Abstentions	Total votes verified
127	24	2	153
This Resolution was passed			
GA10			
Internal Resolution 2020-19 Membership Dues Increase and Triennial Cost of Living Adjustment:			
In favor	Against	Abstentions	Total votes verified
106	42	2	150
This Resolution was passed			
GA 11			
Internal Resolution 2020-16 Continuing of the PILOT program projects			
In favor	Against	Abstentions	Total votes verified
99	43	4	146
This Resolution was passed			

GA13			
Pilot Taskforce Report			
In favor	Against	Abstentions	Total votes verified
115	35	2	152
This Report was passed			
GA14			
Constitutional Advisory Chair's Report			
In favor	Against	Abstentions	Total votes verified
142	8	3	153
This Report was passed			
GA15			
Resolution Chair's Report			
In favor	Against	Abstentions	Total votes verified
148	3	2	153
This Report was passed			

Credentials Report for GA Session 3 on March 25, 2021

Executive Board Members	11
Past International Presidents	7
Delegates	121 from 38 Federations
	30 from countries with associated clubs
Total voting strength	169

Total attendance at GA Session 3 on March 25, 2021

Executive Board Members	11
Past International Presidents	7
Voting Delegates, alternate Delegates and special Delegates	152
Observers	62
Total attendance	170

Past International President Freda Miriklis moved a vote of thanks to the Constitutional Advisory Chairperson Sylvia Perry and also to the Resolutions Chairperson Vicky Mee. They had performed an exemplary service and she wanted to acknowledge their efforts over the last few days, given that their sessions had now finished.

Point of order

BPW Australia wanted to make a point of order around the day's Agenda. She asked for the Parliamentarian to consider the appropriateness of voting on the current Congress proceedings given that the Affiliates needed more than a week to review and discuss these weighty and important documents.

She asked for the Parliamentarian to rule that the vote be set aside and removed from the Agenda until such time that the International Board received all Congress papers as mandated and was given adequate time to review them.

The governance documents stated that the Immediate Past President was mandated to produce these proceedings reports and the Congress reports, and the financial reports within 12 months of Congress. It was over three years since the last Congress but the draft Proceedings to the General Assembly had just been posted on the website, which did not allow members to read through the reports and verify them. She asked that voting be deferred until the reports could be read and time allowed for any adjustment of inaccuracies.

The Chief Parliamentarian confirmed that the Parliamentarians, Constitutional Advisory Committee and the Constitutional Advisory Chairperson had held a meeting and they proposed that this recommendation by BPW Australia be accepted. This issue should be taken outside the General Assembly and the International Board should have a separate meeting about it. A date should be set and there should be a full audit and review prior to any discussions.

The International President confirmed that this part of the Agenda regarding the Congress Proceedings would be deferred.

The Chief Parliamentarian asked to address the meeting on behalf of the Parliamentarians, the Chairperson of the Constitutional Advisory Committee and the Chairperson of the Elections Committee. Having reviewed the activities so far of the 30th General Assembly, several factors had arisen that required attention:

1. That the Nominations Committee had no mandate to disqualify a candidate whose nomination had been rightly accepted.
2. That the Nominations Committee erred by announcing to the 30th General Assembly the disqualification of a candidate for election due to promotion activities.
3. That information had been received that several candidates, particularly both candidates for the post of International President, had information relating to the election posted on the Social Media; this information had been verified and subsequently removed.
4. That the implications of disqualifying both candidates would leave the 30th General Assembly in a difficult position without a candidate for election.
5. That a recommendation was presented for the General Assembly to accept the candidature of both candidates.
6. The 8th bullet point of Procedure Manual 8.3.4 stated that *"Any violation of these requirements prior to the General Assembly will be referred to the Constitutional Advisory Committee. Any violation of these requirements at the General Assembly will be referred to the Nominations Committee."*
7. That the infraction by Catherine Bosshart as candidate for President had been posted on a BPW website for German language speakers and happened prior to the General Assembly. She was advised by the Chairperson of the Constitutional Advisory Committee and it was understood that she had removed the text.
8. That the infraction by Hellen Swales had been posted on her Facebook page during the General Assembly and was reported to the Nominations Chairperson but no action took place. However, this text had been taken down as of March 26, 2021.

The Chief Parliamentarian recommended that in light of the above the General Assembly should retain both candidates on the nominations list for candidature of presidency and

both should go to the elections to be voted for by eligible voting Delegates. This was a new platform and she asked the meeting to respect these recommendations.

Point of clarification

The Resolutions Chairperson referred to the results which the Elections Chairperson had read out. Resolution 2020 –19 itself had not passed. Instead it had been agreed that it would be debated only if 2020 – 14 was lost. As 2020— 14 had passed, this meant that 2020 – 19 would not be debated and there would be a cessation of annual dues increases. The international President thanked her for the clarification, adding that that was why the budget had to be adjusted with no increase in the membership, because the budget had been originally drafted to include the increase in membership dues of €1 per year.

Further to the statement by the Chief Parliamentarian, the Chairperson of the Constitutional Advisory Committee asked to read an email on the same matter:

“Dear Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair, we wish to share with you an issue of serious concern that has come to our attention. During the past few days of this General Assembly we have been told on several occasions that no lobbying or promoting any candidate is allowed. We have also been told that the penalty for any lobbying or promoting of the candidate either by other members or by the candidate herself, will lead to serious consequences for the actual candidate and can result in her losing her nomination. The dilemma now facing us is that Catherine Bosshart who is standing for the position of International Executive has been promoting herself on the international website of BPW by placing her presentational speech on the site. She first uploaded this to You Tube on 14th March and it was uploaded to the BPW site on 22nd March before she gave her introduction to the GA. This gives her an unfair promotion over other candidates who have not resorted themselves to promoting themselves in this way. Surely the same rules must apply to all candidates. If there is no lobbying or a promotion of any candidate, then that must surely mean no promotion by any means. We as a BPW organization must follow the rules that have been set out by BPW. We have to be mindful at all times of these rules and that they apply to everyone”. It was signed by: Mary Papadopoulou BPW President Cyprus, Moyra McMahon President BPW Ireland, Carmen Taheny IPP BPW Ireland, Ann Plaskie President BPW Belgium, Miepje Questier IPP BPW Belgium, Christine Dujardin Past President BPW Belgium, Beatrice Lüthi and Claudine Esseiva, Co-Presidents BPW Switzerland. Silvia Vigatà President BPW Spain, Thalia Valkouma President BPW Greece –Thessaloniki, Chantal Vandewalle BPW Belgium. The CAC Chairperson had received this email while the Chief Parliamentarian was reading the statement so she had forwarded it to the President’s Office, to BPW Executive Secretary Bessie Hironimus and to the Chief Parliamentarian.

The Chief Parliamentarian said that this recommendation had to be tabled. She was liaising with the other Parliamentarians because a similar item had arisen about the other candidate for the Presidency Hellen Swales who had been invited to speak at a European Conference. She wanted to remain impartial through all this process, to ensure there was no conflict of interest.

The Nominations Chairperson asked to make a minor correction to the report from the Chief Parliamentarian which had indicated that no action had been taken on point 8. In fact, investigations were underway and the Nominations Committee was in the process of evaluating the situation. That complaint had been notified to them while the Chairperson was presenting her report at the previous session.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich asked for five minutes of the Congress session in addition to the five minutes for the Past International President's Report so that she could inform the meeting properly.

The International President wanted to refer this request to the Parliamentarian as BPW Australia had already requested that this should be postponed.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich agreed with the recommendation by BPW Australia. However, she wanted to the General Assembly to accord her an extra five minutes when presenting her report. Other reports were allocated 20 minutes or more with discussions. She also asked if Roshan Strange could have the opportunity to address the General Assembly. Roshan had sent an email requesting the time but had not received a response. It was only fair for the members to be given the chance to listen.

The International President would not rule on this request and referred it to the Chief Parliamentarian because BPW Australia had asked that it should be deferred because there was a lack of financials.

The Chief Parliamentarian pointed out that a motion had been put on the floor by BPW Australia that all items in respect of the financial reports and the documentation be discussed outside the General Assembly and that all members be entitled to review everything before any discussions are laid on the table. So she asked that the International President request a Secunder for that motion.

In response to the international President's request, BPW New Zealand and Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan seconded the motion.

Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson had requested earlier in the week that all people who were in the Observers' room as they were not voting Delegates, but who needed to speak to the General Assembly or ask any questions should be given a special right to access the General Assembly room, as in the case of the Nominations Committee Chairperson has. That request had been granted but the CAC Chairperson had also asked specifically that Roshan Strange should be allowed into the General Assembly room in case any questions arose on the financial reports.

The International President replied that following the motion of BPW Australia as seconded by BPW New Zealand and Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan, the Congress Proceedings would not be discussed or presented because of the lack of financial information.

Point of clarification

BPW Australia pointed out that she had originally asked the Parliamentarian to consider that there be no vote on the Congress Proceedings until all relevant information had been received.

BPW Switzerland seconded the motion of BPW Australia and added that the recommendation of the Parliamentarians concerning the violation of the Procedure Manual did not comply with Swiss Law. BPW Switzerland had sent a letter to the Resolutions Chair, the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson and also the Nominations Chairperson about the basics of Swiss Law. She asked them to re-address this topic as it was up to the General Assembly to decide about the violation of the Procedure Manual.

Point of information

The Executive Secretary wanted to inform the members that the report of the Immediate Past President had not been included in the Reports book. The report usually appeared after the Reports of the Executive Committee. She asked why it had apparently been declined because she had forwarded it in due time twice to the President's Office. Each Immediate Past President remained a member of the Executive Committee for one year after completion of mandate and her report had always been published so this appeared to be censorship.

The Chief Parliamentarian explained that the Constitutional Advisory Committee and Parliamentarians had held a meeting to discuss this. The CAC Chairperson had spoken with Immediate Past President Dr. Yasmin Darwich as certain items in the report had been deemed inappropriate to be presented in the format in which it had been received. So following that discussion, the Immediate Past President was advised to only provide the information for her accomplishments during that post-mandate year and some exceptional work she had done in the past.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson clarified that she had not spoken with the Immediate Past President but had sent her an email and asked her to confirm receipt.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich had not yet read it. So, the CAC Chairperson asked for her to be given time to consider it. As Chairperson of the meeting, the International President agreed.

The email gave feedback to Past International President Yasmin on her report for the General Assembly, from the Parliamentarians, Chairperson of the Constitutional Advisory Committee and the Chairperson of the Elections Committee, as follows: *"I appreciate the wonderful contribution as IPP [...] the language of the report has high probability of opening up BPW to the risk of litigation and the incidental damage to BPW's reputation. That we recognize your right to be here and to state your case. That we understand you are dissatisfied with the outcomes of the motions taken at the International Board and the resulting action. We however hold that the General Assembly is not the appropriate place to bring up the issues raised in your report. We will recommend to the International Board to appoint an external independent mediator acceptable to both parties to review and settle this case and avoid a new Executive from the burden of taking on the case. We therefore request you, in the spirit of BPW International Collect, amend your report to the General Assembly in the following ways: restrict your report to your role as Immediate Past International President; your report showing focus on your achievements and challenges. The items pertaining to the Cairo Congress should be associated with your report to the Cairo Congress proceedings, but please note item 2 above, that your report be dated and signed accordingly"*.

BPW Japan recommended that discussion should be continued until all members were in agreement.

The Vice President – UN wanted to second the previous motion.

Point of clarification

BPW USA commented that the Agenda showed two items: the report of the Immediate Past President and presentation of the Cairo Congress Proceedings. She understood that it had been proposed to postpone the presentation of the Cairo Congress Proceedings but the report of the Immediate Past President should be allowed.

The International President felt that BPW USA had misunderstood. The report of the International Past President would be presented as per the Agenda but anything relating to the Cairo Congress in that report should be excluded from the Past International President's report. That report was currently not compliant with the rules and regulations of BPW International, so the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson and the Parliamentarians had written the email to the Past International President to ask her to amend her report accordingly.

The Executive Secretary wondered if all the reports had been censored equally, because the reports from the Executive Finance Officer and the International President had been slanderous towards her in alleging that she had committed fraud. Her lawyer recommended that she demand a retraction and correction of that report. She asked that all reports be treated equally.

The Chief Parliamentarian referred the Executive Secretary to the BPW Collect. Information had been presented in a report and her understanding was that the allegation of fraud was not directed at the Executive Secretary but concerned a bank check. There was going to be a recommendation put on the table that an external auditor or mediator be appointed in respect to the Congress accounts, the Congress process and the existing accounts. It was important to prevent the organization's reputation from being damaged or discredited, hence the original recommendation to the Immediate Past President to change her report. With ECOSOC status at the United Nations it was important to maintain professionalism and our credibility.

Point of clarification

Past International President Liz Benham had understood that the financial part of the Proceedings should be set aside but confirmation of that decision was still pending. She also found it sad that at this very late stage a Past International President's Report had been reviewed and censored. These reports had been seemingly all submitted on time, so she found it difficult to understand that the Chief Parliamentarian, and Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson and the Elections Chairperson – although there were no elections in this situation – had deemed the report to be potentially contentious in law.

During this General Assembly there had been many libelous accusations made against various people. So there had to be a standard in place, and the General Assembly was the highest authority in the organization so it should be allowed to decide. Unfortunately, the GA documentation had arrived so late that there had not been enough time to prepare properly, which was unfair to Delegates in the meeting who were being called upon to make decisions. She asked who was censoring this reports and were other reports also censored or edited in any way.

She sought clarification that the financial part of the Congress Proceedings was to be set aside but that the Past International President could still speak to the Proceedings and her report, in accordance with the Agenda.

The International President replied that the motion from BPW Australia referred to deferring the whole Proceedings because it had not been received in time. This motion had been seconded. According to the BPW Constitution, the Proceedings had to be published within 12 months, but they were only posted on the website during the week of this General Assembly. The International President sought guidance from the Parliamentarians.

The Chief Parliamentarian had received clarifications on some issues. Firstly, in response to the comments by BPW Switzerland on Swiss Law: BPW International had been founded in Geneva, Switzerland and therefore the Swiss Code had to be followed.

The organization had a set of governance documents: Rules of Debate, Standing Orders, Constitution and the Procedure Manual.

In Article 64 of Swiss Civil Code, the General meeting and members of the supreme governing body of the association, which is in accordance with our Constitution and the general meeting is called by the committee and general meetings must be convened in accordance with the rules set out in the Articles of the Association and also is required by law if one of the members so request. At article 65 of Swiss Civil Code; the general meeting of members decides on omissions and exclusions of members, appoints a committee and decides all matters which are not reserved to other governing bodies.

Article C4 of the BPW International Constitution stated: *"The highest governing body for BPW International is the General Assembly held during the BPW International Congress. Between General Assemblies, the International Board is the governing body [...] The President is the Chairperson of the General Assembly, the International Board and the Executive."* Article 8.3.4 of the Procedure Manual stated that *"any violations of these requirements prior to the General Assembly will be referred to the Constitutional Advisory Committee. Any violations of these requirements at the General Assembly are referred to the Nominations Committee."*

So while the General Assembly was being held, it should be the General Assembly who decided, based on a report of the Nominations Committee about consequences of breaches of rules and violations of the Procedure Manual. Also during the General Assembly, it should be the General Assembly who decided on any issues for which responsibilities were not clearly defined.

The motion from BPW Australia had asked that all the financial reports be deferred and that was seconded by BPW New Zealand.

BPW Australia emphasized that her motion was that the General Assembly should consider setting aside the voting on the Congress Proceedings from the Agenda because it would not be feasible to vote on something that had not been received in full and Delegates had not had sufficient time to fully read.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson said that the Immediate Past President had the right to speak to her reports regarding her role during this triennium and she also had the right to present the Proceedings. She agreed with BPW Australia that there should be no voting, because a vote was only possible if the fullest information were available. Although she had raised concerns that there could be some information in the report that may be subject to litigation, there were also remarks in the Executive Finance Officer's report presented to the General Assembly earlier, which members might wish to have struck out of the records. Because these remarks were connected to that report but it had possibly not been recognized at the time.

The International President invited the Immediate Past President to present her report.

Report of the Immediate Past President

At this stage, Dr. Yasmin Darwich was unclear on what to report, given the limitations imposed on her earlier in the session which seemed to prevent her saying what the members deserved to know.

Not wishing to refer to the issue about finances, she explained her intention behind the report was to convey that the Cairo Congress report had not been finalized, because the proper source documents that the International Executive requested had never been received. She expressed her dismay that a decision had been taken at the last minute to stop her presenting her report in full and that a mediator should intervene. With many members of the Executive – including the CAC Chairperson – she had spent three years of her life trying to find a solution. It had been the worst time for her in this organization.

In sharing her PowerPoint, she expressed her intent to present the report accurately but she would try to skip over as much information as necessary so as not to bother anyone. The constitutional duties of the Immediate Past President were: to be part of the Executive for one year; to be the advisor to the International President; with the Past Executive Secretary – Dr. Catherine Bosshart – to present the Congress Proceedings, which were the Minutes of the General Assembly, a year before Congress and with the Immediate Finance Officer, to present the finance and audit report a year before Congress.

Her PowerPoint gave two links to the Cairo Congress Proceedings which she hoped had been distributed to all members of the International Board. There was also a link from a meeting in Europe approved by the Regional Coordinator – Europe and by the European Presidents where all decisions were addressed in a transparent way. As Past Executive Finance Officer Roshan Strange had apparently not been given access to this meeting, she wanted to emphasize that this triennium had been characterized by legal threats from the International President. As this was her final address to the General Assembly, she did not wish to complain about the way in which she and many of the Executive members had been treated when they had tried to protect the members' money but if the organization were to be free from defamations, she wondered how it was possible for members and contractors to receive a lawsuit every time they disagreed with the International President.

She had attended all the events during this triennium. However, she had never received the official appointment to lead the Taskforce that she had requested and which had been approved. Instead, with Dr. Anne Hilty she had launched a webinar training service Program entitled "Leadership in BPW". Together, they had produced 42 webinars now available on YouTube as their legacy in support of BPW members worldwide. Topics included: "How to start a club", "The history of BPW", "Advocacy in BPW" and "Leadership in BPW". BPW members were already leaders so this training was more about how to behave in BPW International, how to follow the rules and how to be the people who could make a difference. That was the main thrust behind the series of webinars. She expressed her gratitude to Dr. Anne Hilty who had spent many hours preparing these webinars and hoped members would enjoy them.

She also expressed gratitude to God, her family and the Executive Members who had served with honor and pride during this triennium. She praised Past Executive Finance Officer Roshan Strange, who had stood by her values and ethics, and thanked Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson Sylvia Perry for her integrity and fairness during difficult times. She greatly appreciated Regional Coordinators Diana Barragán and Dawne Williams who had been appointed by the Executive to investigate the issue of Cairo Congress finances. Dr. Darwich thanked the Past Presidents for their support, acknowledging those who had kept their trust in her and also thanked all the

BPW members for their patience in waiting for the Congress finances to be finalized after more than three years. She was grateful to have drawn inspiration from BPW Founder, Dr. Lena Madesin Phillips.

Referring to the Congress Proceedings, she explained that they had been waiting for information from Past Executive Secretary Dr. Catherine Bosshart. Due to multiple duties she had not been able to send the information as requested. She also recognized that it had been a challenge to finalize the Proceedings because the Congress video was of very poor quality and missing information that had to be recovered from different sources.

She had been reviewing the last draft of the Congress Proceedings with the Director of the Past President's Office, Alejandra Frías, but as a medical doctor, she had also been working full time at the hospital, so this was a very challenging time.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich moved her Past International President's report and the Congress Proceedings report.

In response to the International President she reiterated that she was moving both reports as they referred to both her official duties as Immediate Past International President, even if she had not been able to provide advice for the Executive.

BPW Benin seconded the report of the Immediate Past International President.

The International President wanted her to separate the report and the Congress Proceedings.

The Immediate Past International President explained that she had compiled only one report to address both her duties as International Past President.

The Chief Parliamentarian countered that she had actually presented two reports so they had to be voted on accordingly. A Secunder was needed for the Congress Proceedings report. They were listed as two separate reports in BPW records.

Executive Secretary Bessie Hironimus seconded the Congress Proceedings report.

BPW Spain thanked the Past International President for all the work that she had done since the Cairo Congress and expressed appreciation to all the members who had accompanied her during her mandate.

As the daughter of the Immediate Past President, Yasmin El-Sayah (BPW Mexico) expressed her immense pride in her mother, who had sacrificed so much time of her life, work, and time with her family to give all she could to BPW International. As a member for 25 years she had been born into the organization because of her mother. It used to be exciting and fun working towards the goal of helping women all over the world but the past three years, had not been fun. She hoped everyone could move on and enjoy a different future for BPW.

Past International President Freda Miriklis admitted this was a very difficult situation but felt the issue at hand was that the Immediate Past President still had un-discharged responsibilities and this Congress had to hold her to account. This was both unprecedented and highly irregular in the history of BPW International, which had been exposed to financial and reputational risk.

She asked the Immediate Past International President about her report. There was a USD5,000 or €5,000-line item in the budget passed in Cairo which had been allocated to the office of Past International President, which at the time was unprecedented. It was a

payment to be made to the Immediate Past President and she recalled the latter stating at Cairo Congress that the money was to support the finishing of the Congress Proceedings. Given that the General Assembly had not received the written Congress Proceedings or the Congress financial report, contrary to the constitutional guidelines, she asked the Immediate Past President to confirm whether or not the money has been spent and if it had, to itemize such expenditure.

The Immediate Past President had understood that finances were not to be discussed but was very pleased to answer although in the budget €4,000 had been allocated as the budget of the Past International President: this had nothing to do with the Congress Proceedings. There was a separate budget within the Congress budget to pay for the Congress Proceedings and Past President Freda Mirkilis had also worked with the same company in the UK. So, the €4,000 budget item had been used partly to pay for an office because the Executive Finance Officer had refused to pay for the three months during which they had shared the office.

Past International President Freda Mirkilis moved that the Immediate Past President submit a report to the International Board showing how the monies were spent and documenting the return on investment (ROI) given that this was the first time that such a payment had been made to a Past International President.

The Immediate Past President would welcome the opportunity but she had not been allowed to talk about finances and the past Executive Finance Officer Roshan Strange had not been allowed to attend this session.

The Chief Parliamentarian interjected to point out that all discussions on the Cairo Congress finances had been deferred.

Point of clarification

As requested, the Chief Parliamentarian reassured the meeting that the CAC Chair and Parliamentarians were not censoring the report of the Immediate Past International President, but they had simply advising her to separate it.

BPW USA spoke as a first time attendee and Delegate, asking that the meeting trusted the Immediate Past President to present her information appropriately. As a voting Delegate, she did not understand how it would be possible to vote on reports if they were not allowed to hear them. With 175 people at this meeting, she believed they were the ones who should be making that determination and not someone else. It should be possible for the Executive committee member to present her report unimpeded and it should be up to the voting Delegates to determine whether to accept their report or not.

The First Vice President – Membership admitted that she had witnessed the previous interventions with great sadness, but thanked the Immediate Past President for all the work she had undertaken in the name of BPW. Having known her personally since 1999, she had seen her work tirelessly on behalf of the organization since she was a Young BPW. When she first met her, she said that if she cut herself, she would bleed BPW. Many members were so very proud of her achievements and saddened that the past three years had caused her so much harm. She wished her well for the future.

The Young BPW Representative from Nepal believed Dr. Yasmin Darwich represented the face of BPW International. Meeting her for the first time at the sub-regional conference, made her realize that BPW was so much more than BPW Nepal. BPW International gave members global citizenship and she wanted Dr. Darwich to know that she had made a difference to the world and had earned her full respect. She was sorry that this period had been so hard on her when the organization was supposed to come together and make

a difference. Young members needed her continuing guidance and she hoped she would always be there for them.

BPW Italy considered that there had been no infractions or violations during the nominations process, however Dr. Yasmin Darwich should not be part of the General Assembly because there was a conflict of interest. BPW Italy felt that they had to leave BPW International because they were not being properly represented.

Point of clarification

BPW UAE commented that the International Board had approved the motions raised by BPW Kuwait and they should be implemented. We thanked the Executive Finance Officer for implementing motion number 4 but so far motions 2 and 3 had not been implemented. She asked whether it was a breach of the Constitution not to implement the decisions of the International Board. It seemed as though the Immediate Past President Dr. Yasmin Darwich had not transferred the BPW International money from Chase Bank in the United States of America to HSBC in London, contrary to the decision of the International Board. It also appeared as though the Past Executive Finance Officer had not supplied the full financial information about Cairo Congress.

The Chief Parliamentarian ruled that items had been raised that were not to be discussed in the General Assembly but instead it had been decided earlier in the sessions that they would instead be moved to the International Board.

At the request of the International President, the Timekeeper indicated that there was one hour to go until the end of the session and over 30 minutes had been spent discussing that single item.

The International President closed the discussion.

Disaster Relief Campaign

The international President was aware that COVID had made life difficult for everyone but many countries had experienced other national disasters. BPW International had established a COVID Fund for national disasters and this had helped some members support their sisters from other parts of the world, for example, by paying their dues. They had also supported them in running projects and the Disaster Relief Fund which had helped following the disaster in Lebanon in the true spirit and sisterhood of BPW International. Many BPW members had helped their sisters in Lebanon and the President of BPW Lebanon had already sent her thanks to all those who had contributed to Lebanon.

Donations had been in the form of cash but also sleeping bags from BPW Cyprus and a container from BPW Australia with sewing machines and accessories. Cash donations had been received from BPW Thailand, BPW Taiwan, BPW Korea, and from individual members. Special recognition would be given to all members who had contributed to disaster relief in Lebanon. Many Affiliates such as BPW Egypt, BPW Kuwait, BPW Bahrain and BPW Madrid had also supported their sisters via the COVID fund.

There had also been national disasters in Greece and in Turkey. It was the intention of BPW International to send funds but they were waiting to receive information from members on the ground about what types of projects were needed.

The Disaster Relief was a very important tool for BPW International in sisterhood to promote the spirit of BPW International and to implement the real objectives and aims of BPW International in support of members facing such disasters.

Full information about the sums donated and projects implemented would be circulated.

The International president gave the floor to the President of BPW Lebanon.

The President of BPW Lebanon thanked everybody for their help following this disaster, for example by sending money or items such as the sleeping bags from BPW Cyprus. She thanked BPW Australia for the container of sewing machines and confirmed she would write to everyone who sent such aid.

She supported the words of the Vice President – Membership and was sad to have witnessed the atmosphere at this General Assembly. She had only been a member for 5 or 6 years but she knew that many speakers had 10, 20, 25 or over 30 years' experience in BPW and they should act as role models. This had not been the case during this General Assembly, where money had made such a problem. Having lost the internet connection, she had been unable to follow the speech of Past President Dr. Yasmin Darwich but thanked the IT Team who had tried to restore her connection. Having read some of the emails, she recognized the whole issue was about money so she called for an independent person to investigate.

Point of order

The Chief Parliamentarian reiterated that the discussion around the Cairo expenditure and finances was being deferred to the International Board meeting.

The President of BPW Lebanon hoped that they would quickly find a solution for this problem.

The International President reiterated that the Disaster Relief campaigns had always been a policy for BPW International to support members all over the world.

She hoped the incoming Executive would follow up on the request that she had sent to BPW Greece and BPW Turkey to advise which projects they needed and suggest a budget in order to be able to implement the Disaster Relief Fund for those members affected in Greece and in Turkey.

Future International Congresses

The International President opened the floor to a brainstorming session. The original plan had been for the face-to-face Congress to be held in the USA, followed by Latin America. The only bid received had been from Argentina to host the XXXI Congress but unfortunately because of COVID it had been impossible to conduct the site inspection in Argentina. So she deferred this for the next Executive. In the meantime, she wanted to receive opinions from the General Assembly about the current situation and about the next future International Congresses. She invited BPW Argentina to make a short presentation.

BPW Argentina declared that they had presented a proposal to host Congress and they had actually started implementing that proposal for example by investigating all the supporting factors such as the airports. The hotels were ready to receive the guests and Delegates and they had studied everything in order to be ready and prepared to host the Congress in 2023.

They had also met with the Minister of Local Tourism in Buenos Aires who had expressed their enthusiasm to host the Congress. They had worked on all the necessary tourism measures so that all members of BPW would be well received.

There were also benefits from this difficult time, such as the reduction in the value of Argentina's currency. In hosting the Congress, Argentina would take all the necessary steps to ensure everyone was satisfied. Although President Amany had been unable to visit Argentina during the COVID-19 pandemic, she had been in communication with BPW Argentina and no doubt the incoming President would want to conduct a field visit to Argentina to see whether or not it was suitable to host the Congress so they would make her very welcome.

The International President thanked her for her statement about Argentina and hoped the next Executive would be able to move forward. She then invited further comments.

The Regional Coordinator - Latin America wanted to reinforce the fact that Argentina had duly submitted their bid to host the Congress and had been the only country to do so. She hoped this Congress would be held in 2023 as it was their turn to do so. Meanwhile, she congratulated Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich for her incredible work and reminded BPW Lebanon that it was the same Past International President who had insisted that BPW International should publish this request for BPW's help.

BPW Spain thanked BPW Argentina for agreeing to organize the next Congress in Argentina. BPW Spain would offer all their support to ensure the Congress was a great success.

BPW USA protested as the North American Region had not been given their rightful turn to host Congress due to circumstances entirely beyond their control and asked for the opportunity to do so.

Another delegate from BPW USA supported that statement and reiterated that they should be given their rightful opportunity.

Emergency motion

BPW Australia raised the fact that BPW Australia had put in an Emergency Motion, which had been recognized by the Resolutions Chair.

Although it was an internal motion, BPW Australia wanted to recommend it be passed to the next International Board to assess the possibility of BPW International contracting an independent business management and support firm for the core functions and support functions of Congress.

BPW voluntary members did not have the core skills required to organize a Congress and it had been seen over the last 12 months that if this had been operated as a third party contract, the organization could have set aside the necessary funds and simply contracted the third party to run everything. This had to take place to move the organization into a higher level 21st Century business-oriented approach which would allow the Executive Members and Host Planning Committees to focus on the core goals of BPW International rather than overwhelming the Presidents and the Host Committees with the minutiae of Congress organization. It would also provide independent oversight of any budgetary issues. She recommended that this Resolution be passed to the incoming International Executive so that discussions could begin to plan the next Congress.

Another delegate from BPW Australia strongly supported this resolution. She also felt it appropriate to offer condolences to any members online who had lost family, friends or

colleagues throughout this pandemic, adding that there had to be some future planning around contingencies such as a pandemic, epidemic, a natural disaster in a country having a Congress or civil unrest.

BPW Australia had pushed for this virtual Congress because they were currently prohibited from travelling abroad without special permissions and it was difficult to how such a disease could mutate over the next triennium. The incoming Executive Board had to look at contingency planning and in-build it into any future events. Many members who were business owners had incorporated disaster and resilience policies in their own organizations so BPW International should do the same.

Past International President Liz Benham spoke for the USA, commenting on their sadness that it had been 36 years since the International Congress had been held in the United States. She felt they deserved to have the opportunity, especially as members had worked very hard to arrange it, only for it to be cancelled. She asked that at least the USA be given the first right of refusal on the next Congress location decision, otherwise they would have to wait another 9 or 10, or 12 years.

Point of clarification

BPW USA expressed her appreciation of Argentina but wanted to support BPW USA having the first right of refusal and questioned why the next Congress was being scheduled for 2023 when the new administration would take effect in 2021, so would only have 2 years of mandate instead of the standard 3.

The International President reassured her that no decision had yet been taken, hence the current discussion.

Point of clarification

The Chief Parliamentarian referred the meeting to the BPW Constitution which stated clearly that each triennium was three years, starting with the election of the new Executive Board by members of the General Assembly.

BPW St Kitts added her support for North America and the Caribbean to be given the first right of refusal, since they had lost the chance to host Congress. She also pointed out that the English feed from the interpreters was not working.

BPW Italy supported the proposal by the Regional Coordinator – Latin America to hold the Congress in Argentina.

BPW USA made three comments. She agreed the North American and Caribbean Region should have the right of first refusal to host the next Congress and possibly the General Assembly should vote on this. The second suggestion concerned identifying people waiting to speak and she reminded the Chairperson of the meeting to look at the screen and click on the participants to see the list of people waiting, shown in the order that they raised their hands. She also pointed out that Immediate Past President Dr. Yasmin Darwich had been waiting to speak for a while, although she acknowledged that the priority was being given to those who had not previously spoken.

BPW Canada supported the request to hold the Congress in the North American and Caribbean Region for the reasons stated. Everyone had been affected by the current crisis and she respected the work that Argentina had done. If the next Congress were to be held

in Argentina, the following one should be held in North America to avoid having to wait 12-15 years for the next opportunity.

Immediate Past President Dr. Yasmin Darwich requested the right of reply to the strong statements from BPW UAE and BPW Italy about her integrity. She asked for those comments to be deleted from the Minutes because they were out of order as it had already been agreed that the item would be addressed away from the General Assembly. She had also been prevented from presenting her report and those statements damaged her integrity.

The International President felt that the Parliamentarians had made it very clear that discussions in relation to finances would be deferred.

BPW Argentina stated that it was very important for members to know that as it did not have its turn, Orlando should have the opportunity to bid against Argentina to host this Congress.

The Regional Coordinator – Latin America supported that suggestion. For instance, each venue could show their Congress budgets so that the most financially advantageous could be chosen at this time where finances were so difficult for all countries.

The Vice President – UN suggested following the counsel of BPW Canada, whereby the next Congress should be held in Argentina because a lot of preparations had already been completed and then the following one could be held in the North America and the Caribbean region.

The Chief Parliamentarian asked for a vote on the two motions on the floor.

Point of order

The Regional Coordinator North America and the Caribbean was unable to attend these sessions due to workload but she asked that the North America and the Caribbean region be given an opportunity to put in a bid to host Congress since they missed their opportunity because of Coronavirus.

The International President agreed that it could form a motion on the floor and sought advice from the Chief Parliamentarian.

The Chief Parliamentarian explained that there were 2 items on the table: that the North America and the Caribbean region had asked that since their Congress was cancelled because of COVID that they should be given the opportunity to hold the Congress in 2024. BPW Argentina had requested that they should host that Congress. This would call for a formal motion to be put requiring a vote on the 2 proposals, either for BPW to proceed with the original venue in the original country and region or should it move on the scheduled rotation to Latin America and take place in Argentina.

BPW Hong Kong believed both cities should be put up to vote for the International Board to decide. However, she wanted to see risk planning incorporated within the motion, in case the current situation or another situation developed, requiring the Congress to be moved online again. The Host Country should have to prove that they were able to do this effectively and smoothly.

Point of order

The Executive Secretary explained that the decision of when and where the Congress was held belonged to the Executive. The Executive had decided long ago to have it in North America. There had been a pause because of the COVID crisis. Now that this was being

resolved, Congress should take place as had been planned for two years. It was not up to the International Board or the General Assembly, it had already been decided and announced, so on behalf of the North America region she requested that the Congress be held in that region.

The International President agreed that this process was in accordance with the Procedure Manual which described the rotation of venues and stated that the next Congress should be held in Latin America. The General Assembly had to decide whether to retain North America or move to the next region in the sequence which was Latin America, for which BPW Argentina had submitted the only proposal.

The Chief Parliamentarian acknowledged that this was an unusual situation – hence North America and the Caribbean had asked for the original Congress to be re-hosted in their country. However, if the rules were to be followed in strict accordance with the Procedure Manual, Argentina would be the next venue. She asked the International President to respect that some members had requested these two options be put to the vote because of COVID.

Point of clarification

BPW Australia added that this session in the General Assembly had been advertised as a brainstorming session and not necessarily one where motions would be raised for voting, especially as the Rules of Debate had already been agreed, ruling out votes or motions raised within the meeting. So if the organizational standard in the Procedure Manual was that it was the Executive which chose the venue then we should be suggesting that along with the Internal Resolution that BPW Australia proposed, the 2 suggestions of Latin America or North America & the Caribbean should be left with the incoming International Executive.

The International President referred back to the advice of the Parliamentarians, whereby it was the Executive who decided on the country within a region and Latin America had already been preparing to host the next Congress. This was why the brainstorming was happening, for the General Assembly to decide which region and the Executive then to select the country.

Past International President Freda Miriklis supported the suggestion made by BPW Singapore and BPW Australia calling for a mitigation strategy to be incorporated with in the organization's overall strategy. COVID had demonstrated the need for contingency planning.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan recommended that this matter be decided by the next Executive to be elected during this General Assembly.

The Chief Timekeeper reminded everyone that the session was due to end in 15 minutes.

Past International President Liz Benham pointed out that it was quite clear in the Procedure Manual that the region for the next Congress had already been chosen and it was not the region's fault that it was being overlooked because of COVID. So, the region should have first right of refusal. The incoming Executive should make that decision with Argentina or the Latin America region as that would be the correct process. Secondly, she requested that before the end of the current session, an update should be given on the voting strategies to enable Delegates to work accordingly.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich referred to the Procedure Manual, as Executive Secretary had mentioned. It was not up to the Executive to take the decision about the Congress venue. The decision had been made in 2016 that the Congress would be in North America and Orlando had been selected. She asked which Executive decision was valid: the one taken for Congress 2020 to be held in Orlando or the one that had chosen Argentina, although she could not recall this being mentioned in any Executive Meetings. Both locations deserved to host the Congress and being Latin American she would welcome it if it were held in Argentina but did not think that this was the platform to discuss it. She felt the Executive had to take the decision because North America was also prevented from hosting the virtual Congress. It had been completely excluded from the organization of the Congress in Orlando and the Congress in a virtual mode. So, she suggested that the next Executive should take the decision but if they felt unable to do so, the decision should be referred to the International Board instead of discussing it here. Also, they had to decide if it would take place in 2023 or 2024.

The International President reminded the meeting that the General Assembly was the highest body in BPW, which was why this brainstorming was taking place, to capture everyone's views. BPW International was always responsible for arranging Congress, not the host, as was the case with Cairo Congress. She acknowledged that there were now several suggestions for the General Assembly or the International Board to consider. There were two motions for Latin America and for North America and the Caribbean to submit their official bids.

Nominations from the floor for the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Health

At the request of the International President, the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee confirmed that they had received some applications, which they had not yet had time to fully review, as the Committee members were in different time zones. However, the day before it had been decided by the General Assembly that nominations from the floor would be invited again this morning for those countries who had not been in attendance during the last session.

Point of information

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich asked the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee if the notice inviting these nominations from the floor had been circulated to the International Board, as she had repeatedly asked the President's Office to do.

As an Observer, the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee was unsure what the Delegates had received but she had on 3 occasions asked the President's Office to circulate the invitation for nominations.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich agreed that in order to be fair and inclusive, all the Delegates should have been informed of the possibility to submit nominations. She asked the President's Office to immediately circulate this information and give the members a few hours to submit nominations.

The International President agreed, and allowed nominations from the floor until 09:00 the next morning.

The Chairperson of the Nominations Committee would aim to process the applications already received but reminded BPW Italy to submit their paperwork. She also mentioned that BPW New Zealand had withdrawn their nomination for Dianne Glenn.

Nominations from the floor

BPW USA had nominated Maria de Sousa. Maria had served in the past on the Standing committee on Health and they felt that she would do an excellent job. Her application had already been submitted.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan asked about the deadline for these nominations as all candidates from the floor should be given the same rights as other candidates for the role as Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Health. That meant they should be able to present their two-minute speech at the next session. It would be very helpful if the congress team could receive the list of names and email addresses by the next day so that they could contact the candidates and invite them to submit a video or prepare a speech.

The International President and the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee discussed the possible deadline as if they waited until March 28, this would be too late. The Chairperson of the Nominations committee also asked if e-mailed nominations would be allowed.

Point of information

BPW Hong Kong was mindful that there were only 3 minutes left for this session and as it was already very late in Asia time zones, asked for this and future sessions to end on time. She also asked for clarification on what would be voted on in the coming voting session, for example the different Internal/External Resolutions and the election of the International President, and how long would the Delegates have for this voting.

BPW Canada commented that at the previous session it had been announced that the call for nominations from the floor would take place during this session. She felt that anybody who was preparing to put a nomination forward would have done that. The Chairperson of the Nominations committee had now issued that call so the only item remaining was to specify the deadline for applications.

BPW Singapore agreed with BPW Canada as the General Assembly had agreed to give an opportunity for those clubs who were having internet issues to see the re-run of this session and then submit their nominations. These should now be closed ready for the applications to be submitted and voted upon.

The International President agreed.

The Executive Secretary pointed out that there was still a motion pending on the floor, so this should either be seconded or withdrawn. There had been a nomination and a motion by the Past International President.

The International President asked her to confirm which nomination she was referring to. The Executive Secretary replied that BPW USA had made a nomination which needed to be seconded or withdrawn because it was pending on the floor.

The International President thought the nomination had been seconded and processed. The Nominations Committee Chairperson had received the nomination for Maria de Sousa that morning. BPW USA seconded it again, for the record.

The International President confirmed that this nominations procedure had followed the correct process and reminded the meeting that a recording of the General Assembly would be available after close of the session for those not in attendance to view prior to voting. She invited those nominated to submit their applications. It was not the responsibility of the President's Office to announce nominations as they were formally announced during the General Assembly. However, the President's Office would supply blank nomination forms on request at the start of the process. She closed the nominations from the floor for the Health Committee and asked the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee to promptly confirm when they would be processed so that the presentations from the candidates could be added to the Program for the next session.

BPW Italy withdrew their nomination from the floor for Chairperson of the Standing committee on Health.

The Timekeeper reminded the International President that the time had overrun.

The Chairperson of the Nominations Committee confirmed that the deadline for receipt of applications would be 14:00 UTC the following day.

The Elections Chairperson announced that the General Assembly Voting Session III would address:

- Election of the International President
- Voting on Constitutional amendment C1
- Voting on External resolutions 2020-1 to 2020-10
- Adoption of the reports from General Assembly Sessions 4, 5 and 6.

Referring to the rescheduled vote for the candidates for President, she noted that as both candidates were eligible for election and that the Election of the Executive would normally have been held on the last day of the General Assembly, it was necessary during this virtual assembly that the election of the International President be held earlier to allow the unsuccessful candidate to decide if she intended to stand for a Vice President's role. While the election of the Executive was crucial for the organization, it was particularly so for the role of the International President who was the face and voice of BPW International at many levels. This election had been more challenging, given the discussions during and outside the General Assembly. Delegates had been entrusted to vote on behalf of their members, who were relying on their due diligence in electing members to the most senior roles. At the normal face-to-face General Assembly, delegations were able to approach candidates during breaks to ask questions relevant to their members and seek the candidates' responses. On this occasion, such interaction was impossible so she asked all the Delegates to stop, take a breath and re-visit their due diligence by reviewing the candidates' profile and statement on the BPW International website alongside the role of the International President outlined in R2 (2.1) of the Procedure Manual. Their vote would then be cast without prejudice or undue influence and they could stand before their members, stating that they had acted in the best interest of the organization going forward and the next three years with the most appropriate candidates.

The International President acknowledged many raised hands but confirmed that the session was about to end, due to the late hour in Asia.

Point of information

BPW Malta asked if the voting for the third set of reports would take place at the end of this session.

The Elections Chairperson apologized for omitting them from the list but confirmed they would take place after the session.

The International President thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the session.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION 7
Sunday March 28, 2021 14:00-16:30 hrs. UTC
Chair: Dr. Amany Asfour
BPW International President

There were some initial problems with the audio for Delegates and Observers. In response to a query from BPW Mexico, the International President explained that the session was being recorded centrally.

The Executive Secretary expressed condolences from the Executive Committee to BPW Egypt for the recent train accident and building collapse in Egypt.

The International President thanked her and hoped that everyone had received the revised Program for the Session:

- Announcements
- Voting results – Chair of the Elections Committee
- Election results – Chair of the Elections Committee
- Finalization of the candidates for Vice Presidents – Chair of the Elections Committee.
- Credentials Report – Chair of the Credentials Committee
- Candidates for Chair of the Health Committee – Chair of the Nominations Committee
- Presentation of the triennium Budget – Executive Finance Officer
- Discussion on the triennium Budget – Executive Finance Officer
- Finalization of the project booklet, the COVID booklet and the 90th Anniversary booklet
- Announcement on voting and information about the new voting schedule – Chair of the Elections Committee

The International President explained that several emails had been received indicating confusion about the Global Candle lighting ceremony and Awards ceremony. This event was open to all members and clubs. A Zoom link had been sent to the Presidents of all Federations and Delegates. She hoped that everyone would attend with their candles to share in this very important additional ceremony, scheduled for March 29 starting at 14:00 UTC. It was not part of the 8 sessions of the General Assembly. It would comprise 2 sessions: the BPW International Awards Ceremony, presenting the Lena Madesin Philips and Gertrude Mongella Awards, the Badge of Honor, the International President's awards and special awards, followed by the Candle Lighting Ceremony.

Report by the Chairperson of the Elections Committee
Voting results

The voting strength was 169, with a quorum of 56.

	Candidates	Votes in favor
President	Dr. Catherine Bosshart	84
	Hellen Swales	76

Abstentions: 2

Total votes received and verified: 162

The Elections Chairperson congratulated Dr. Catherine Bosshart for her election as International President and invited Hellen Swales to notify the President's Office as soon as possible as to whether or not she would like to take up a Vice President candidacy. She referred her to the BPW Guidelines requiring a one-page presentation and asked Hellen to draft her statement ready to be circulated with the call to vote. Votes would go forward for the other Executive members.

GA16			
Constitutional Amendment C1 - The Registered Office			
In favor	Against	Abstentions	Total votes verified
91	65	4	160
A two thirds majority was required, therefore this was lost.			
GA17			
External Resolutions 2020-01 to 2020-10, with the exception of 2020 – 03 and 2020 – 0			
In favor	Against	Abstentions	Total votes verified
152	3	5	160
This was passed.			
GA18			
Young BPW Representative's Report			
In favor	Against	Abstentions	Total votes verified
147	10	2	159
This was passed.			
GA19			
UN Representatives' report			
In favor	Against	Abstentions	Total votes verified
125	35	1	161
This was passed.			
GA20			
Taskforce Chairs' Reports			
In favor	Against	Abstentions	Total votes verified
126	30	3	159
This was passed.			
GA21			
Immediate Past President's Report			
In favor	Against	Abstentions	Total votes verified
75	73	14	162
This was passed.			

The international President thanked the elections Chairperson for her work and congratulated the successful candidates and next BPW International President, Dr.

Catherine Bosshart. She also thanked Hellen Swales for her candidacy and was looking forward to seeing her submit her nomination for the Vice President role.

Credentials Report for GA Session 7 on March 28, 2021

The Credentials Chairperson reported as follows:

Executive Board Members	11
Past International Presidents	7
Delegates	121 from 38 Federations
	30 from countries with associated clubs
Total voting strength	169

Attendees at GA Session 6 on March 26, 2021

The Credentials Chairperson reported as follows:

Executive Board Members	11
Past International Presidents	7
Voting Delegates, alternate Delegates and special Delegates	150
Observers	69
Total attendees	168

Point of clarification

BPW Mexico had noticed there were over 20 staff, interpreters and people present who were not Delegates. These did not seem to be included in the reports.

The Credentials Chair replied that as they did not have a vote, they were included in the “Special delegates” category.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair pointed out that the Agenda had been revised after approval of the original Agenda as published in the General Assembly Workbook. It was possible to make changes, although she had stated earlier in the week that more time should be allocated for a proper examination of the accounts, as they had not been formally presented in the full format for audit and approved in a manner which the organization needed to legally endorse them. The First Vice President – Membership had frequently mentioned this, for example there were no comparisons of actuals against budget. She moved that the triennium accounts should be included in the Agenda.

The International President asked her to clarify what she wanted to be added to the Agenda.

Speaking as a voting Past International President rather than Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair, Sylvia Perry specified that the Executive Finance Officer’s report had technically been accepted but the accounts had not been presented in the usual way. They were normally presented formally and agreed by an auditor. These accounts did not show budgets against actuals and it was a legal necessity for any annual meeting or general meeting of an organization that the accounts be presented and approved in a proper manner and she did not feel this was the case so far. She asked for time to be allocated to examine them further.

The International President asked her to indicate what was missing in this case, as the audit report for 2018 – 2019, had been presented, as had all the financial information as

per the Procedure Manual. This was the same information as had been received from Cairo, Jeju and Helsinki Congresses.

Past International President Sylvia Perry felt that the presentation had not been fully discussed and formally accepted.

The Executive Finance Officer (EFO) stated that she had presented the financial statement 2017 – 2018 – 2019 according to the Procedure Manual. The financial report with the audit for 2020 had not yet been prepared, which had also been the case at Cairo, Jeju and Helsinki Congresses. Having checked the Congress Workbooks from Cairo, Jeju and Helsinki Congresses she felt the validation was the same and did not understand what information was missing. She would soon present the previous budget or provisional budget for the next triennium.

The Executive Secretary disagreed with the EFO. The Executive had not approved the budget as they only received it two days earlier, and they had not been asked to approve it. They had also not approved the budget for two years previously, despite repeated requests from the Executive to the EFO.

The Executive Finance Office referred to the meetings in New York in 2018 and in Bangkok in 2019 where she had presented the balance sheet and the profit and loss account. She did not understand the alleged problem. For 2020, no Executive meeting had been held, but she had the financial statement approved by the auditors for 2017 – 18 and 2019. For 2020, she had sent all the documents to the auditors and when they approve the documents they would send her the financial statement. The deadline for this, as in previous years and according to the Procedure Manual would be June 2021. She had checked with the previous Finance Director Roshan Strange what had happened in the previous triennium, and this was the same.

Point of order

The Chief Parliamentarian referred to two items pending on the table. One was that a financial audit had been reviewed and issued to all the members. As per the Congress Program, the budgets for 2018 – 2019 and 2019 – 2020 were with the auditors for sign off, so they could not be published until the auditor had reviewed them. There was a discussion on the budget that had to be put on the table and that formed part of the financial report. Having checked the Cairo documentation, the Executive Finance Officer had to submit her report and then the budget was considered separately.

Report of the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee

The Chairperson of the Nominations Committee presented an amendment to her original report. During the 5th session she had promised to report back to the General Assembly about candidate Hellen Swale's Facebook post. The committee had received screenshots of a Facebook post from multiple sources but at the time of their investigation, this Facebook post was not available on the internet. So they checked with Hellen and her reply had been; *"yes it was on my page and I thought it was OK. But when I realized it wasn't I took it down."* So that concluded the investigation into the complaint.

In the 6th session, the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair had read a letter to the General Assembly from several members of the European Clubs and Federations. Once the Nominations chairperson had received the full email she had been able to investigate it along with her committee, and they found that Dr. Catherine Bosshart still had the YouTube video and two other promotional items visible on the internet. Although the election was over, the Chairperson wanted to report these findings.

Nominations for the Standing Committee Chair on Health

For full transparency, the chairperson of the Nominations Committee informed the General Assembly that candidate Naglaa Lofty was President of the Affiliate and so she had countersigned her own nomination form. This was not allowed so they had asked the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair if it was appropriate to give her a second chance, and they had been able to obtain the signature of her Vice President to support her nomination. So, Naglaa Lofty remained a candidate for the Chair of the Standing Committee on Health. Marta Solimano had not submitted her written statement so they were forced to declare her nomination to be unacceptable. Maria de Sousa remained a candidate.

BPW Hong Kong was concerned that items were being left without due discussion before the next Agenda item was taken. There were still raised hands on a previous important topic, so she asked for them to be allowed to speak.

The International President responded that if the raised hands did not refer the topic under discussion, they could not be considered. The previous subject under discussion had been closed and it had not even been on the Agenda.

Candidate Marta Solimano, BPW Argentina stated that she had resent all her nomination papers to the CAC Chair and to the President's Office.

The Chairperson of the Nominations Committee replied that in paragraph 8.3.1 of the Procedure Manual, under "Nomination document requirements" it required "*a written statement (one (1) page and five hundred (500) words maximum in English) by the candidate detailing why they are standing and what they would like to achieve in the role*". The Nominations Committee had not received that, despite writing to the candidate and to the nominating President reminding them to submit it.

Marta Solimano reiterated that she had submitted this document.

The International President asked her to forward it now to the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee and once she received it they would decide how to deal with it. The Chairperson of the Nominations Committee agreed that they had shown flexibility towards other candidates so if the General Assembly agreed, she would like to do the same for Marta.

The International President added that if she sent it previously, it would be acceptable to ask her to resend it but not if she had not already submitted it.

BPW USA pointed out Marta appeared to have sent her information to everyone except the people she was supposed to send it to, the Nominations Committee. If she had done that, then those people whom she identified would have it in their email and one of them could forward it to the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee. That would also demonstrate if she had sent it in at the appropriate time and would cover all the bases.

The Chief Parliamentarian confirmed Marta's document had been received by the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair and the Parliamentarians.

Past International President Liz Benham added that if the documents had been sent to the President's Office, the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair and the Parliamentarians, which was incorrect in the procedure, she wondered if they had been sent in on time and if so, why had they not been forwarded. This was delaying another process, and the General Assembly had to make sure that the rules were followed. The

timeline had been set. If the documents had been sent before the timeline they should have been forwarded, so she expressed her surprise that this had not been the case. The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair confirmed that she had not received it otherwise she would have sent it on.

The Chief Parliamentarian confirmed that the email from Marta had come through three days before but strangely had been addressed the Mentoring International Taskforce. So under the right process it should have been submitted to the President's Office.

BPW Australia wanted to query the ability to see the budgets that were to be discussed but apologized for bringing up this lapsed item.

The Chief Parliamentarians confirmed she had just forwarded the email from Marta Solimano to the Chairperson of the Nominations Committee

Elisabeth Bosshart of BPW Switzerland gave a personal statement. This General Assembly had elected a President who had been nominated not in line with due process and who had been proven to have broken the rules several times. The evidence was presented to the responsible Chairpersons but it was prevented from being shared with the General Assembly. Also the General Assembly was the body that should have decided on the admissibility of the candidacy. If this election were confirmed, there could be no complaints about future rule breaking. So, this would end her relationship with BPW.

The International President thanked her.

The Nominations Committee Chairperson and Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair confirmed receipt of candidate Marta Solimano's email but it contained a CV in Spanish and there was no statement in English.

The International President requested guidance from Chief Parliamentarian or the Nominations Chair on the process.

The Chief Parliamentarian confirmed it should be the process required by the Nominations Committee. If the application had not been received in the correct format on the correct forms, then it could not be accepted and the Nominations Committee had the right to reject it.

The chairperson of the Nominations Committee agreed that they could not accept the nomination paperwork by Marta Solimano as it was incomplete. The Procedure Manual was very clear on this and a special email had been sent to the candidate and to her President, requesting the correct paperwork 14:00 the previous day.

The Nominations Committee confirmed the final list of official candidates for the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Health:

- Professor Naglaa Lofty Dabees, BPW Egypt
- Maria de Sousa, BPW USA
-

Presentations by the nominees for Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Health

Professor Naglaa Lofty Dabees, BPW Egypt

The candidate introduced herself as Professor of Radiology and Head of Radiology Department in seven university hospitals and as head of the Women's Image Unit in Tanta University Hospital. A member of BPW Cairo since 2000, she established and chaired the BPW Egypt Health and Wellbeing committee.

Naglaa had organized many campaigns on health awareness for women and implemented several projects for early screening for breast cancer. She had also contributed to several outreach initiatives to rural areas in Egypt to raise health awareness among women in

those areas. She had also conducted several awareness-raising sessions regarding female genital mutilation, and chaired family planning Programs in Egypt. In 2010 she had been honored to be elected Member of the Egyptian Parliament where she continued to lobby for legislation on women's empowerment.

Her plan for the Standing Committee on Health would be to build on the previous work of the Chair of the Health Committee and connect the health projects of BPW Affiliates under SDG 3. She would promote health awareness campaigns for women's health, including early intervention for breast cancer and cervical cancer. She planned to organize health awareness campaign on FGM and violence against women. Each year, a survey would be run among BPW International members to assess the needs of BPW Affiliates regarding tools for organizing health awareness campaigns locally in the federations and clubs.

Maria de Sousa, BPW USA

Having served as a BPW Health Taskforce and Health committee member, if elected she would strive to work within BPW organizational purpose, mission and strategic direction as the committee pursued its course. Maria believed that her educational and professional background as a licensed clinical laboratory scientist and toxicologist, with a Doctorate in Law and qualification as a licensed attorney, combined with her Master's degree in healthcare administration made her an excellent advocate to promote effective healthcare in collaboration with the BPW Regional Health Committees. The recent COVID-19 pandemic had made everyone realize the disparities within the healthcare delivery system and how an emphasis on prevention and good nutrition could increase the likelihood of survival.

Being of Indian origin from Goa, India and being born and raised in Iran, now residing in the United States, she spoke several languages so she understood different cultures. She was also an Associate Professor at the University Master's Program.

BPW Malta wished the best of luck to the candidates for the Chair of the Health Committee, but wanted to make a statement. Fearing that there would always be doubt as to the validity of the Presidency of BPW for the next triennium, she demanded an audit of the vote for International President. She felt it was important if BPW were to survive this dark moment and not to have an exodus of members and loss of impact of important issues benefiting women.

The International President sought the opinion of the Elections Chair, who deferred to the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair.

The International President invited comments by the Chief Parliamentarian and the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair.

The Chief Parliamentarian pointed out that the voting had been done by the members. This was electronic voting and all the members' voices had been heard. The matter had been discussed over the last few days and a number of things were known to have occurred, as tabled at the session on Friday

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair said this was an unprecedented situation and asked to receive the request in writing. She would then consider the matter before issuing a response.

The International President agreed.

BPW Spain seconded the request by BPW Malta as she totally agreed that the Presidency votes had to be audited to prevent damage to BPW International. Having redone the elections, all the results could be in doubt.

The International President reassured her that scrutineers from BPW Canada, BPW Australia and BPW Germany had counted the votes and agreed on the results, so she urged caution in any expressions of doubt.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich reminded the General Assembly that she had already raised a point of order about the voting system and it had been disregarded. There was no doubt about the scrutineers but about the voting system.

A complaint had been received from several Affiliates about the candidacy of Dr. Catherine Bosshart, disregarding the advice of the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair before the General Assembly. She had received a complaint on March 5, and the candidate had been asked to shut down her promotional activity but she did not comply, even after the warning during this General Assembly. The Immediate Past President felt that the process had not been conducted properly so it was vital to review the case to ensure full transparency and avoid any doubt about the results, to avoid great damage to BPW International. The Parliamentarians and everybody now was expressing their opinion. The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair said that the committee had no power. The Constitutional Advisory Committee had received the official complaint before the General Assembly and forwarded it to the committee so under Swiss Law it was not possible to currently move forward with the process of election of the International President.

The International President reiterated that the election process was complete.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich commented that as International President she could not issue that statement but had to remain neutral.

The International President insisted on her neutrality. BPW Malta had requested an audit of the voting process, not for the Nominations Committee, not for the disqualification of any candidate.

The Chairperson of the Elections Committee pointed out that the members of the Elections Committee were very robust in doing their duty and they paid attention to due diligence so she assured the General Assembly that the results had been thoroughly examined before being reported. Any previous vote for the International President had been destroyed immediately because that was the organization's standard process. At the end of a vote, everything was destroyed.

Additionally, she felt this had all been dealt with on numerous occasions over the last couple of sessions and she had also sent out a letter about the upcoming voting and calling on Delegates before voting for the International President to revisit their due diligence and go through all the matters such as their statements online, the Constitution and the Procedure Manual for role for the International President.

The process for the election had been quite clear so if members were asking for an audit of the vote, this had been done very clearly and very thoroughly by the Elections Committee and she would not consider calling into question the integrity of the Elections Committee because they had done a great job. She stood by the voting as it had been reported.

The International President thanked her and reiterated that the General Assembly had heard the statement from the Elections Chair that the voting had been thoroughly

overseen, including examination by the scrutineers and approval by the General Assembly. The Elections Committee comprised Judith Van Unen (BPW Australia), Sheila Crook (BPW Canada) and Marion Volk (BPW Germany). All had been accepted and they were the ones handling the voting procedure and vote counting.

The International President had been elected with due diligence, with the correct voting procedure. The two nominees may not have acted fully according to the procedures but they had been accepted, nominated and voted upon. Any queries should have been made before the vote. The Elections Chair had supported the voting process which had been completed following due diligence and all the scrutineers had done a great job.

BPW Canada observed there was a motion on the floor that had been duly seconded and a discussion was now under way. So, although the International President was trying to reassure everyone but as Chair she should not be making these comments.

So, she asked for verification that this was a motion on the floor, asking for the names of the mover and seconder to be restated. It should go to the membership for vote, to see if the membership wanted a re-count of the vote. In any election it was the prerogative of the voting body to ask for a re-count. From personal experience she warned that if such a re-count were requested and not granted, it would cast a shadow over the next three years, hanging over the International President's head.

Mistakes could happen so she urged the International president to allow the re-count, to ensure that everyone who had voted was a Delegate with the right to vote. She felt that once the scrutineers confirmed that they had checked the count and that everyone who had voted was indeed a Delegate with voting rights then this would satisfy the membership.

The International President thanked BPW Canada for clarifying the request. As Chair, she was not speaking in favor or against the motion. The motion was about a re-count, not disqualifying any candidates and she agreed with that difference.

The Elections Chair pointed out that given there was a motion on the floor for a recount, she would be happy to forward it to the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair, the Credentials Chair, and the Parliamentarians the information received to compile the previous report. It would normally have been destroyed immediately afterwards, but on this occasion, given the lateness of the hour, she had not yet deleted it. She agreed that several people should verify this information as well as those officials.

The International President thanked the Elections Chair for this solution to the issue of the audit and recount. She asked her to send all the results to the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair and the Parliamentarians.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair said that she had conferred with her colleagues and a report had been sent to the Nominations Committee, so any reference after that should go to the Nominations Committee and not to the Elections Chair.

The Elections Chair started to disagree.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair felt that the information had been coming in throughout the period so it was difficult to keep up with it. She had spoken with the Chief Parliamentarian, who was also a member of the Constitutional Advisory Committee, and they felt that she had made the right sort of report to the Nominations Committee. Her role as Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair ended at that point, apart from providing the Nominations Committee with procedural guidance.

Subsequently, the information went directly to them and they had reported this to the meeting. The Elections Committee Chairperson had reported that she had every faith in

the integrity of the Elections Committee so there was little else to be done if the recommendations from the Nominations Committee were not accepted or even discussed.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair had briefly left the meeting to have that discussion with the Chief Parliamentarian, but on her return heard the proposal for a recount and the Elections Chairperson saying that she was going to send the records to the Parliamentarians and to Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair. If this were the case, the Elections Chair would have to ask for the General Assembly's approval.

The Elections Chair was unsure who had put the motion and seconded it, but was happy to send this through to the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair, the Parliamentarians and to the Credentials Chair that they could check the voting delegates listed were valid and that the count was correct. Ideally, this should be done before the end of the session so that it could be confirmed before the session closed. She asked the General Assembly if there were any objections to that to raise their hands.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan explained that this matter had to be concluded before the end of this session, otherwise the next voting session could not begin. Once the next voting session began, the result of the previous session was deleted. As the next session was the last voting session before the end of the General Assembly, there would be no election of the Executive and the Standing Committees

The other aspect to consider was data protection. Under EU [GDPR Regulations](#), when people cast a closed vote, those votes were protected so they could not be reviewed without their permission or this would violate the regulations of the EU.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chairperson believed this would only affect Affiliates within the European Union.

The Elections Chair pointed out that Australia also followed those rules. The fact that she was sending the data to the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair, the Parliamentarians and the Credentials Chair would assume the integrity of these people to ensure that the information and the email addresses were not exposed in any way and that they would destroy the information after validation.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair agreed that all data would be protected in compliance with GDPR. In her experience, the votes were not destroyed immediately after the vote but at the end of the meeting, when permission was sought to destroy the votes. At this General Assembly, the first round of votes had to be destroyed in accordance with the request of the meeting. She would examine this issue in more detail but pointed out that she was receiving messages to say the point was not so much the accuracy or the truthfulness of the vote but the concerns remained about the transgression on publicity. The Chief Parliamentarian added that the members had received the recommendations from the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair and Parliamentarians with the voting invitation. It was important that the elections were fair and transparent and that the Vice President elections could take place. The original voting had been pulled and re-run. The members duly complied, they were in agreement. The voting had been sent out to all the members in accordance with the rules and regulations, along with documentation to ensure everyone was duly informed about how the Constitutional Advisory Committee and the Parliamentarians had come to their rulings. While there had been a motion on the floor to re-run the voting it was important to understand that there were a number of voting Delegates in the meeting whose voices had not been heard.

The International President added that the Elections Chair had already put the proposal to send all the information to the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair and the Parliamentarians under the terms of privacy law. The request had been to audit the vote, not to re-run it.

BPW Malta confirmed that she had called for an audit for both votes to queries arising subsequently.

The International President queried whether she was asking for the previous vote to be destroyed by the General Assembly first.

BPW Malta responded that a decision had been taken by 3 women to destroy the first vote without putting it to the floor, whereas this decision should have been made by all the Delegates. She assumed the votes were still there in the system as the only way to delete them would be to destroy the whole system. So she asked for an independent body to conduct the audit without divulging how anybody voted. She had submitted the email as requested and hoped that her request and the motion which had already been seconded on the floor would be respected.

The International President asked the Chief Parliamentarian to reference the first vote as the General Assembly had already taken the decision. For the second vote, the Chief parliamentarian had raised a motion but according to Standing Orders it was not possible to vote on motions in this virtual forum. The motion had to be tabled and seconded before proceeding to a vote by the General Assembly after the session and this would delay everything.

The Elections Chair confirmed she had sent the information to the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair, the Chief Parliamentarian and the Credentials Chair, requesting immediate action so they could report back to her before the end of this session. As far as the first vote was concerned, it was the General Assembly that had allowed the second vote to continue so therefore the first voting was moot and there was no report made on it because it had been withdrawn by the time it was time to report. So, she believed the process had been valid. She had confidence in the voting technology that was being used. It was very clear and the Elections Committee had had no trouble in being able to agree on a report. They checked each other's work so she had total confidence in what had gone before. The Delegates had spoken and she would report back and hopefully satisfy the floor.

In response to all the raised hands, the International President acknowledged them but as the Elections Chair had sent all the information to the Parliamentarians and Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair, it was now with them to verify the voting. She closed the discussion.

The next item on the Agenda would be the presentation of the triennium budget by the Executive Finance Officer.

Presentation of the triennium budget 2021-2024

The Executive Finance Officer explained this was dated 2021-2024 in case the General Assembly wanted to consider the budget for 2024, which was presumably the date of the next General Assembly. However, she would confine herself to 2021-2023 if preferred.

According to the Resolution at Helsinki Congress, the fee for this year was €23.50 for each member. But at this virtual General Assembly, BPW Europe had presented Resolution number 2020-14 “Cessation of the annual increase in membership dues”. This Resolution had passed on March 26 which meant that it was now necessary to stop the €1 increase in dues for each member immediately. So in 2021 the fees would now be €22.50 for each member.

As Roshan Strange, the accountant, had already sent out all the membership fee invoices for 2021, they were now incorrect. The solution according to the advice of the accountant was for any Affiliates who had already paid these invoices to be credited for the overpayment on their invoices for 2022. This would avoid transfer charges so would be the best solution for BPW and for the Affiliates. In fact, most clubs had not yet paid so they would receive an amended invoice and she showed an example of such an invoice.

The Congress Fund was €0.53 per member and this account was used to reduce the fees for registration at the General Assembly or at the International Congress. For example, at this virtual General Assembly the registration fee was only €80 because the Congress Fund had been used to offset the full price, in accordance with the Resolution approved at Helsinki Congress.

Motion on unbudgeted expenses for January – March 2021

Motion:

The International Board approves the attached proposed unbudgeted expenses for January– March 2021 in order to allow BPW International to continue to operate during these 3 months till the General Assembly in March 2021.

Seconded by Second Vice President – UN, Dr. Catherine Bosshart.

The budget approved at the Cairo Congress was until 31 December 2020, but this General Assembly was taking place in March 2021, which meant there had been three months without a budget. The solution according to section 1.4.1 of the Procedure Manual was for the EFO to present a motion to the International Board asking for approval of unbudgeted expenses for three months: January, February and March 2021. She had presented the motion to the International Board who approved this on February 7, 2021. Any unbudgeted expenses until March 31st 2021 would be audited by the auditors at the end of the current term. The budget lines for all the expenses that she had proposed in the document were consistent with the budget lines for expenditure approved at the Cairo Congress.

The Board had approved the unbudgeted expenses in the amount of €127,325. This represented one quarter of the total expenses for the 2021 budget (€129,612).

There were currently 22,140 members in total, as many Affiliates had lost members. Some Affiliates had also been abrogated so with the fee per capita of €22.50, the total dues income was €498,150, comprising:

Members of Federations	20,317 = €457,133
Members of clubs	1,823 = € 41,018
	€498,150

The budget for the year 2021 covered April-December 2021 so represented three quarters of a total budget. In this way, the budget was divided into the amounts for the first three months of the year and then the rest of the year. She did not anticipate any problems as not all the expenses had been used.

The EFO showed the budget approved as at Cairo Congress which she had used to calculate the budget lines but the real budget was headed “Proposed budget”. She had grouped the years 2021 – 24 into one column because the income amounts were the same.

	Approved budget	Proposed budgets
	1 Jan – 31 Dec 2020	2021 – 2024
Income	Euros	Euros
Members Income		
• Federation fees	506,250	457,133
• Associate club fees	45,000	41,018
• Individual associate fees	-	300
Friends fees	5,000	5,000
Inventory sales	15,000	15,000
Leadership Summit net income	-	-
Total income	571,250	518,451

There were now three Individual Associate members.

In her previous report, the EFO had suggested promoting BPW, by increasing the number of Friends of BPW, as her friend the late BPW International President Dr. Livia Ricci had done so actively across the world. A lot of Friends had joined in Sicily during Dr. Ricci’s triennium and this had continued during Dr. Yasmin Darwich’s presidency as she had travelled to Sicily, so the EFO hoped this trend would continue.

Cost of Sales (Stock) stood at €12,000 for this triennium, as it had been for 2020.

	Approved budget	Proposed budgets
	1 Jan – 31 Dec 2020	2021 – 2024
Expenditure	Euros	Euros
President's Office	119,500	133,000
Finance Director's Office	55,000	55,000
Organizational Services & Young BPW Training	103,030	65,841
Executive meetings	35,000	35,000
Executive expenses	148,500	117,000
Standing Committees	14,270	16,000
Ad hoc Committees	2,000	1,860
Task Forces	13,000	12,000
Representations	15,950	12,750
Communications	26,000	35,000
Bank fees	12,000	8,000
Total expenditure	544,250	491,451

- In the Finance Office there were an accountant and an auditor.
- Under Organizational Services and Young BPW training, €5000 was for Young BPW Friends and it was used to support the participation of Young BPW members at the Leadership Summit in New York because young members – with their ideas, their interests and motivation – were the best tool to promote BPW International.
- For the Executive Meetings, there was one meeting every year.
- The Executive Expenses related to the expenses of the Executive Members.

This Budget with €491,451 of expenses gave an operating a profit €15,000 for each year.

Breakdown of Expenditure

	Approved budget	Proposed budgets
	1 Jan – 31 Dec 2020	2021 – 2024
	Euros	Euros
President's Office		
Staff costs	40,000	30,000
Telecommunications & IT	15,000	20,000
Office supplies	11,500	30,000
Software & office equipment	30,000	30,000
IT support	15,000	15,000
Marketing & development	8,000	8,000
Organizational Services	98,030	60,841
Young BPW Training – Leadership Summit	5,000	5,000
Finance Director's Office		
Accounting	50,000	50,000
Auditing	5,000	5,000
Executive meetings	35,000	35,000
Executive expenses		
President	85,000	56,500
Immediate Past President (1 yr)		4,500
Finance Director (EFO)	5,000	5,000
Executive Secretary	5,000	5,000
Vice President – UN	5,000	5,000
Vice President - Membership	5,000	5,000
Young BPW Chair	5,000	5,000
RC – Africa	5,500	5,000
RC – Asia Pacific	5,500	5,000
RC – Europe	5,500	5,000
RC – Latin America	5,500	5,000
RC – North America	5,500	5,000
Leadership Summit	11,000	6,000
Standing Committees		
Membership	11,000	11,000
Young BPW	3,000	3,000
Agriculture	-	200
Art, Culture	-	200
Business, Trade & Technology	-	200
Development, Training, Employment	-	200
Environment	-	200
Finance	135	200
Health	-	200
Legislation	-	200
Projects	-	200
Public Relations	-	200
UN Status of Women	-	200

	Approved budget	Proposed budgets
	1 Jan – 31 Dec 2020	2021 – 2024
	Euros	Euros
Ad hoc Committees		
Constitution	1,500	1,360
Resolutions	500	500
Task Forces		
Archive	6,000	5,000
Pilot program	7,000	7,000
Representations		
UN Vienna	850	750
UN New York	3,500	1,500
UN Geneva	850	750
WHO Geneva	650	750
UNESCO	850	750
UNICEF	-	750
UNIDO Vienna	300	750
FAO	850	750
ILO Geneva	300	750
ILO Training Centre	300	750
UN Meetings & subscriptions	5,000	2,100
Other International Organizations	2,500	2,400
Communications		
Website maintenance	11,000	10,000
Website hosting	-	10,000
President's language liaisons	15,000	15,000
Bank fees	12,000	8,000
Bad debts	-	-
Total expenditure	544,250	491,451
Operating profit	15,000	15,000
Other Income/expenditure		
Realized foreign exchange loss	-10,000	-10,000
Unrealized foreign exchange loss	-	-
Interest income	-	-
Total other income/expenditure	-10,000	-10,000
NET PROFIT(LOSS)	5,000	5,000

- Under the President's Office, the staffing cost included the salary of the Director, the expenses of the International President and this year's attendance at the UN.
- Telecommunication and IT, mobile, telephone license, office maintenance, cleaning, postage, domain name – all these items were included in this line of the budget.
- Office equipment, software licenses, electricity, security, equipment, additional software service, per request.
- IT support, technical consultation, back up of data, set up of administrative software to support or increase virtual activities, as during this period, virtual activity was the only type of activity for members worldwide.
- Marketing and Development was all the activity to promote BPW public relations initiatives.
- Organizational services represented the work to promote and realize BPW International.
- Executive expenses travel and all activities necessary for the International President.
- There were expenses for the Immediate Past President only for the one year, 2021, while she remained a member of the Executive.
- For the Young BPW Chair and Executive Regional Coordinators, the 2021-2024 budget for each would be €5000.
- The amount had been reduced for the Leaders' Summit to show the different income.
- For the Membership and the Young BPW Standing Committees there was a set amount, but she wanted to allocate €200 to each of the other Standing Committees. This was not a large sum but it would be helpful to them.
- For the Ad hoc Committees, Constitution was currently chaired by Past International President Sylvia Perry (BPW UK) and Resolutions by Vicky Mee (BPW New Zealand).
- The EFO considered there to be 2 active Taskforces: Archive and the Pilot program. At the Archive in Amsterdam, there was a cost for maintenance, for scanning documents. At the previous General Assembly, Past International President Dr. Rüegg had presented the Pilot Program. There were no reimbursements for the other Taskforces. In fact, she herself had been a member of the Projects Committee and had worked without reimbursement.
- Under "Representation", the amounts related to registration for necessary activities where BPW representation was required at the UN in New York, Geneva, at UNESCO etc.
- For "Communication", the amount referred to website maintenance, when the website was updated, when it went online: it included the service and the salary for webhosting. In 2020, the salary amount for the website had appeared under "President's staff" but she would prefer to move it under a different budget line. "Communication" also included translations for the President's Office by Diana Barragán (Spanish and French) and Pinella Bombaci (Italian).

COMPARISON - PROPOSED TRIENNium BUDGET 2021 – 2023

Total expenditures as 97.1% of BPW International total income would mean a surplus of €45,000 in the 3 years. Without the 2020 financial statement from the auditors, she already knew the total income and total expenditure, and presented the comparison as below:

	ACTUAL	PROPOSED BUDGET
	2018 – 2020	2021 – 2023
Total triennium income	€1,548,552	€1,555,353
Total triennium expenditure	€1,324,323	€1,510,353
Surplus	€ 224,229	€ 45,000

She finished her presentation with a quote from Dr. Lena Madesin Philips: *“If our motive is right, if we have faith, vision and courage, accomplishment must come”*.

The International President thanked the Executive Finance Officer and invited questions on the Budget.

BPW Australia had not been able to see the actual versus budgets summary provided. The EFO had provided a snapshot in her Executive Report earlier in the General Assembly where she had made references to actual versus budget of 14.8% and 8.5%. In 2019, she had said she had come into budget, but on looking at the financial reports it was 85% the expenses and the EFO was proposing to go to 97%. So she asked how she was tracking actuals versus budgets to make those decisions.

She also noted that the International President’s expenses were up by 51% from 2016 and according to the 2020 budget, the International President’s expenses in 2019 were €80,000 but in 2020 they had again increased to €85,000.

She asked whether the EFO had allowed for any foreign exchange rate swings in this current budget, because these had actually represented income during the last 2 years, contrary to previous years.

Her last question was to ask what was covered by the proposed minimal budget of €200 for the Standing Committees.

The Executive Finance Officer explained that this was the provisional budget. In her opinion €200 for a Standing Committee was a very symbolic amount. When she had been a member of the Project Standing Committee for 6 years she had worked without a budget because everyone in BPW contributed their passion, interest and motivation free of charge.

Now approaching the end of her mandate, she had considered different years but this was a provisional budget as it was her intention to create a good budget for each member. She had increased the International President’s expenses at the time due to higher telephone bills, but each year the new Executive Finance Officer could evaluate the situation and change the amount in the budget line.

In her working life, she had been Head teacher at a Secondary School and when presenting the provisional budget and budget lines she fully recognized that during the year different situations and different needs would arise, with the resulting impact on the budget and its budget lines.

Not having a budget for January – March 2021 had presented a problem. She had drafted a provisional budget up to 2024 because she fully expected the next General Assembly to take place that year. She had wanted to create a good situation for the new Executive because the Resolution had made budgeting very difficult and the BPW experience was important for each member to create new opportunities and new solutions.

BPW New Zealand had wanted her original Delegate to ask questions about the budget but she had not been given the link to access the meeting. She asked if her other Delegate could speak instead and the International President allowed her to do so.

Referring to the income which would be adjusted according to actual membership numbers, the second Delegate from BPW New Zealand asked whether there had been any consultation with the Membership Committee to pinpoint those figures. She also asked how the budget would be adjusted in line with any potential decrease in membership numbers, specifically which budget line would be used to compensate.

The Executive Finance Officer replied that this was the provisional budget, showing the actual number of members because while the previous Finance Director had created a budget based on 25,000 members she preferred to base the budget on the actual number of members, according to the data provided every January by each Affiliate.

It appeared as though the membership had decreased but hopefully would improve, with the budget being revised accordingly. It was important to have a real budget, although she had presented the budget based on 25,000 members, the COVID pandemic had impacted membership numbers. The world was facing an economic crisis. In BPW International, they had abrogated clubs but she had calculated if the membership numbers improved, the organization would be in a better financial situation.

Point of order

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich commented that the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair had made it very clear that the financial report presented was not concluded even though the meeting had voted on it.

Secondly, the breakdown of the 2020 expenses had been requested by many members in Europe, the majority of Executive Members and by Past International Presidents, and it had still not been provided. In her personal opinion, it would not be possible to approve a budget without this information.

She clarified that Roshan Strange was the accountant for the International Federation of Business and Professional Women and not the EFO's personal accountant.

The Past International President concluded that the General Assembly should be able to review what was laid out in 2020 so that they could approve this budget, as so far there had not been enough time to do that. It was not acceptable to ask for approval of what had simply been shown on screen. The numbers were still needed. Also, the EFO had not yet responded to the questions from BPW Australia so a professional approach was needed.

The Executive Finance Officer responded that in 2017 the Financial Director had presented the provisional budget up to 2020 but at that point the financial statement was with the auditor. She then sent to the International Board in 2018 or 2019 because she asked the accountant about the provisional budget and the accountant told her she could do that. She was sure she had sent the International Board all the documents required

according to the Procedure Manual. She currently had the total income and the total expense but without the auditors' audit she could not send the information to the International Board. Financial Director Roshan also had not sent any information to the Executive Board in the previous triennium. She had only sent the 2015-2016 financial statement because the EFO had sent the 2017 financial statement to the International Board.

BPW New Zealand wanted to ask some questions around the indicated income. The EFO had referred to Friends and Membership but not the Inventory. With regard to COVID it was not clear that the EFO had factored in or put a risk profile around the membership or income. Friends always accelerated just prior to a face-to-face Congress and then for the following 2 years there was always a significant decrease, but the EFO had apparently intended on levelling that out.

She posed the same question with regard to the Inventory, which sold readily at face-to-face Congresses, but not at other times. This meant those two income lines were potentially inflated and not representative of the real situation. The actuals of the figures from the previous years had shown that trend so it was surprising that the EFO had not mirrored that going forward. BPW New Zealand also supported what BPW Australia had said with regard to the comparisons against actuals in the proposed budget. Not enough time had been allocated for the General Assembly to consider those figures so that more pertinent questions could be asked.

She also wanted to draw attention to the Resolution that had been passed around the lack of increase of the €1, seeking to put on the floor that the invoices had already gone out as of March 31 so that increase should be effective as of 2022. She challenged the suggestion regarding credit notes even though it had been a recommendation from Roshan Strange and called for a vote to take place or advice given on that proposal.

The Executive Finance Officer replied that she had prepared the budget according to the Resolution at Helsinki Congress. The General Assembly approved this Resolution and she accepted it but she had only 45 or 46 hours to prepare the new budget. With regard to the Executive meetings, yes if they were online and virtual this would save money. If the Executive meetings were face-to-face, there would still be other income. As there were now vaccinations in Italy, she hoped that from August 2021 it would be possible to travel.

The Executive Secretary mentioned that the Executive Finance Officer had said that the auditors had approved the books. However, the Executive had not received the documentation before it was sent to the auditors. The Executive had asked several questions which remained unanswered, for example, the fact that in 2019 the Executive did not hold the face to face meeting in Egypt which was mandated by the Constitution. However, the account showed a deduction of €16,000: she asked the EFO what this was for.

The Executive Finance Officer replied that she had presented the documentation in 2019 in New York. The Executive meeting had been scheduled for November and a lot of the members did not attend, but she had presented the documents in New York. She did not have the minutes of the meeting to hand.

The Second Vice President – UN pointed out that the meeting had been scheduled in Sharm El Sheikh but many members of the Executive Board had withdrawn at the last

minute. Cancelling the bookings had been difficult and it was regular practice to be charged the full amount for late cancellation.

BPW Italy commented that the budget was an estimate and naturally compiled from the current results. In terms of the auditor's work, the regulations were the same as for the approval of financial reports in Italy. Therefore, as there was no auditors' report, it was pointless to insist that the data be provided. Also, in Italy at least, this was illegal and charges could be pressed. Regarding the numbers, if the previous financial reports had been audited by the auditors, the numbers were obviously correct at that point, however these were estimates so could not be substantive.

For any federations which had already paid, credit notes simply needed to be issued for the €1 increase. This was standard accounting practice.

The financial report showed that BPW International was paying €50,000 for an accountant. She trusted this was someone external to BPW, and not an internal accountant, because to date it had been agreed that members would be working for free for BPW International. She wondered whether this internal accountant was the one who had been auditing the accounts and if so, presumably they volunteered their time.

The Executive Finance Officer agreed with BPW Italy as the law was the same all over the world. The accountant was Roshan Strange, who was a member of BPW Australia.

The Timekeeper announced that the time had ended for this discussion.

BPW Ireland pointed out that it could have been no surprise to the Executive Finance Officer that she would be asked for some detail with regard to the expenditure and income for 2020. She appreciated that those figures would not have been audited but it was disappointing that they had not been provided to the General Assembly as 2020 had obviously not been a normal year. It would be very important to know before contemplating a budget how BPW International had fared in a year which should logically have had less expenditure than normal, particularly travel expenses. She was very disappointed despite correspondence that had been received prior to this meeting that the information had not been provided as the General Assembly was entitled to receive it.

The Executive Finance Officer stated that according to the Procedure Manual she had until June 2021 to send the financial statement with the auditors' statement. She hoped that would be possible. The number of the members had decreased, as had been seen in other organizations globally, for example, in Lions International, of which she was also a member. Motivation was needed to improve the number of members.

The Regional Coordinator – North America and the Caribbean spoke as a financial services expert and a member of the 2017 to 2020 Executive. The 2020 budget had been set in 2017 at a time when no one could have anticipated what would happen in 2020. There was a difference between a "budget" and an "actual" in finance. The budget was a prediction of expenditure and the actual was what was actually spent. As a member of this Executive she had seen no information whatsoever on the utilization of funds. She knew that the organization paid an accountant, Roshan Strange, so she would have expected her to be at the meeting room explaining the utilization of members' funds. The Regional coordinator came from a third world country where a number of members struggled to pay their dues so the organization owed them the opportunity to understand how their funds were spent. In 2020, none of the Executive travelled except the International President, so she wondered how a budget that had been prepared in 2017 could have been used when all the Executive meetings had been held virtually. She concluded by asking how the 2020-2023 budget had been prepared because as an Executive member she had not been asked for input. Instead, she had been presented

with a supposedly final document, so the way in which the financial affairs of the organization were being handled had really disappointed her.

The Executive Finance Officer replied that the accountant Roshan Strange had issued invoices to Affiliates based on the number of members which they had declared. This was real income. When the auditors sent back the financial statement she would share it with the Executive Board according to the Procedure Manual, as in the previous triennia. However, unlike previous triennia there was a surplus of €109,000 thanks to the good work by herself and the accountant.

BPW UAE spoke as a new member of BPW International. She had understood from the governance documents that the Executive Finance Officer was elected by the General Assembly and it was her role to present the budget. According to what she had heard, the staff had been paid accordingly. In a big organization like BPW, she felt that as an accountant, Roshan Strange had no role to address the General Assembly but wondered whether in previous BPW International Congresses an accountant had indeed spoken for the budget. She requested confirmation on who held the roles of Executive Finance Officer and accountant.

The International President replied that the Executive Finance Officer during the last triennium had been Roshan Strange and the accountant in the same period was also Roshan Strange.

The First Vice President – Membership felt that there had been many questions asked during this session but very few answers. Roshan Strange was in the Observers' area. She had been asked to address the meeting but had been denied entry. The First Vice President – Membership wanted to make sure everyone was aware of that, also that she had personally asked the Executive Finance Officer many times for financial reports which she had never received and the EFO was obviously very aware that there must be a report of actuals versus budget. It was impossible for the General Assembly to approve these financial figures based on what had been received. She moved that the financial reports could not be accepted as they stood.

The Executive Finance Officer repeated that in accordance with the Procedure Manual, at the end of January she had circulated the balance sheet and the profit & loss. The same document had been sent by the Finance Director to the Executive Board in the previous triennium. The EFO always worked according to the Procedure Manual. When she received the statement from the auditors between now and June 2021, she would send it. At Cairo Congress, the provisional budget had been approved without the financial statement from the auditors: they sent it in 2018 and in 2018 she circulated it to the Executive Board. She had checked with Roshan which documents were sent to the Board and was told just the balance sheet and profit & loss. This was the same situation. In fact, she recalled receiving those documents in previous years when she had been President of BPW Italy. This was her provisional proposed budget according to the actual situation, the actual numbers of members and in relation to the budget lines approved at Cairo Congress. She worked with honesty and integrity.

The Timekeeper pointed out that the discussion had exceeded the allocated 15 minutes and the whole session was due to end in 10 minutes.

BPW Cyprus declared that in December and January a letter had been sent bearing the signatures of most European Federations and Affiliates, requesting among other things monthly breakdown of expenses of the budget items plus financial reports accompanied by all bank account statements. She urged the Executive Finance Officer to show the members respect, in line with the philosophy of founder Lena Madesin Philips, to respect all women and empower them. It was the members who financed BPW International and

those members were asking questions which could not be answered as no information had been provided. They could no longer continue to observe as outsiders. They belonged to the organization; they were working for the organization, and wanted to be proud of the organization. No one had the right to exclude them so she insisted on receiving answers at this session.

The Executive Finance Officer reiterated that everyone had received the documents in accordance with the Procedure Manual. The bank statements had been sent to the auditors and when they returned the audited documents including the financial statement she would distribute it to the Federations by June 2021, in accordance with the Procedure Manual.

Point of information

The International President added that Delegates had asked for information about the Chase bank account in USA but the International President and Executive Finance Officer had no information about the Chase bank account in USA. They were not the signatories. Instead, the signatories for the two Chase accounts in America were Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich and the Past Executive Finance Officer. The current Officers had no access.

The Executive Finance Officer confirmed that that bank account had not been audited for 5 years. This account contained money from Helsinki, Mexico and Jeju Congresses. However, the Executive Finance Officer and the new International President did not have access to this account.

BPW Spain was surprised that any BPW accounts had not been audited for 5 years. That was a serious situation so she asked how this could have happened and pointed out that the details of each account should be shared. She also asked for clarification on how Roshan Strange had held the dual roles of Executive Finance Officer and accountant at the same time.

The International President replied that this had been the case. She was the Executive Finance Officer and the company Velvet had also been Roshan's accountant.

The Chief Parliamentarian reminded speakers to turn on their cameras while they were speaking, in accordance with Standing orders and the Rules of debate. Several members had put up their hands up to speak but without a video feed.

Past International President Freda Miriklis also had grave concerns to hear that BPW International had unaudited accounts. Speaking in relation to the budgets, she asked for clarification on how the finance committee had arrived at some of the numbers. She asked if contingencies had been factored in, given the uncertainties and the unprecedented situation with COVID.

The Executive Finance Officer had sent membership fee invoices to the members and some members had offered payment to support other members who were having a difficult time paying their dues during the year. A lot of members had not paid but instead asked to pay in two or three instalments, which BPW International had allowed. The problem was the decrease in membership numbers but they had seen an increase, although a lot of Affiliates had been abrogated.

The Chief Parliamentarian asked to speak as she had received a number of requests from members requesting the right to address the meeting. The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair also had a point to raise and some of the critical things that had been mentioned still needed to be discussed. Reports had not been issued and members were requesting that the accountant should feed into the reports.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee chair offered clarification regarding the status of Roshan Strange, as she had been involved. The originally elected Executive Finance Officer (Jo-Ann Pozzi) had died some time into the triennium and Roshan Strange was indeed the accountant at that point. The CAC Chair had then been asked to adjudicate on whether she could act as the Executive Finance Officer and it was decided that she could, provided she was not a paid employee. So it was her understanding that for that time when she was Executive Finance Officer, somebody else did the accountancy. That was the arrangement under the ruling. She asked for the situation to be checked and if Roshan Strange had been in the meeting, she could have answered those questions.

BPW Kuwait thanked the Executive Finance Officer for her presentation about the budget but believed that there should be an international audit, with officers to audit BPW International to prevent irregularities and potential problems with the accreditation of BPW International at the United Nations.

The Timekeeper announced the session was nearly over for the day but there had not yet been a discussion about the budget. So, she asked if the International President would like to prolong the session.

The International President sought to consult the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair with reference to the voting audit.

The Elections Chair confirmed that she had not yet had a reply from the auditing team, which comprised the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair, the Credentials Chair and the Chief Parliamentarian.

The International President agreed that the Constitutional Advisory Committee was liaising with the Chief Parliamentarian.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan had received a message from the Credentials Chair announcing that she had finished her work but she needed to share it with the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair and the Parliamentarians. Accordingly, she asked the General Assembly to wait for the outcome.

BPW Italy used the analogy of a serpent eating its own tail to describe the situation regarding the voting data. The claim of re-checking the data was simply to obstruct the agenda and cast doubt over the impartiality of the committee members.

There were people calmly eating during the proceedings which showed a lack of respect for the General Assembly, the members, and those who were presenting their reports.

The old ways of operating no longer worked. BPW International's reputation was at stake and so it was highly likely that BPW Italy (FIDAPA) would leave. Members were receiving no services and were not listened to. They were only used to generate money which disappeared into accounts that were not reported nor audited.

This negligent behavior was not what Dr. Lena Madesin Phillips would have accepted. Members were looking to find something to unite the organization, not something that created division.

She wondered if the aim was to achieve a fair solution, or simply to stop people from raising their hands and being heard.

BPW Italy was seriously thinking of leaving the organization. They had not yet paid their dues. All these Points of Information were absurd and it was wrong to question the impartiality of the people handling the votes.

It seemed as though members were standing for positions for their own interests, to be in charge. That was not real leadership; it was not the real BPW. BPW Italy wanted an agreement, a fair, conscientious and honest BPW where members recognized there were winners and losers in life. The General Assembly was a waste of time, with all its

points of information and delegates being impolite and unprofessional. BPW Italy wanted no further part of this organization and did not want to pay further money.

The International President admitted this had become a very difficult situation and was waiting for the results from the review process.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair explained that she and the Chief Parliamentarian had thoroughly checked the list of voting delegates against the Credentials, along with every other aspect and found the vote to be correct.

The International President thanked the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair and Parliamentarians and congratulated the incoming International President, Dr. Catherine Bosshart. She also thanked the Credentials Chair and the Nominations Chair. This outcome was very important for the organization and she invited the Elections Chair to explain what would happen next.

Announcement on voting and information about the new voting schedule – Chair of the Elections Committee

The Elections Chair reiterated that the election of the International President stood as previously declared. The members had spoken, even though many people seemingly had mixed feelings about what they wanted as far as a result was concerned. BPW was a democratic organization, the members had spoken and Dr. Catherine Bosshart had been elected as the International President for the next triennium.

Coming up in the next voting session would be the elections for the rest of the Executive. If Hellen Swales had decided to stand as one of the Vice Presidents she would need to confirm that very quickly so that her statement was ready for when the call to vote went out.

A list of the other votes required would be circulated. She thanked everyone for their patience during this difficult session. They could take heart that they had a President and drawing from her past experience, the Elections Chair said she found it useful to think of the maxim “either lead, follow or get out of the way”. She asked all the Delegates and the members of BPW International to stand behind the new leadership and the new Executive. She encouraged everyone to move on and focus on advocating for women who were in desperate need because of the pandemic and the resulting fall-out which had greatly impacted women around the world.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair said that she was receiving messages pointing out that their Points of Order had not been addressed during the meeting.

The International President replied that the issue had already been closed and the General Assembly was waiting for the audit. Several people had already spoken but according to Standing Orders those who had already taken the floor could not take it again.

She brought the meeting to a close and looked forward to seeing everyone at the Global Candle lighting Ceremony.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION 8

March 30, 2021 at 14:00-16:30 hrs. UTC

Chair: Dr. Amany Asfour

BPW International President

The International President welcomed everyone to the 8th and last session of the BPW International General Assembly.

She described her pleasure at seeing everyone at the Global Candle lighting Ceremony and the Awards Ceremony held the night before. This had been a wonderful occasion to showcase the projects being run under the BPW International theme “*Empowering women to realize the Sustainable Development Goals*”. Candles had been lit in remembrance of the BPW sisterhood across the world. Members had been recognized in the “Power to make a difference” awards, which had been bringing change to women across the world. This had been a great testimony to founder Dr. Lena Madesin Phillips during this 90th anniversary year.

The International President had enjoyed sharing this time with the members during these pioneering first virtual sessions and she thanked all the team who had made it happen.

Announcement of the voting and election results from Session 7

The Elections Chair presented the results of the elections. These excluded the two matters that had been put out again for re-election which would be reported before the end of this General Assembly session. The voting strength had been 169 with a quorum of 56.

Role	Candidate	Votes
GA23		
Vice President – United Nations	Chularat Israngkool Na Ayutthaya	76
	Marie-Claude Machon-Honoré	73

Abstentions: 2

Total votes received and verified: 151

GA25		
Executive Secretary	Jenny Gulamani-Abdulla	86
	Bessie Hironymous	62

Abstentions: 2

Total votes received and verified: 150

GA26		
Executive Finance Officer	Eufemia Ippolito	78
	Iguehi Adetiba	65

Abstentions: 4

Total votes received and verified: 147

The Regional Coordinators had been nominated ahead of the General Assembly by their respective regions before being ratified as follows:

	Nominee	Votes		
		In favor	Against	Abstentions
GA27				
Regional Coordinator – Africa	Hadia M. Gondji	129	8	8
Total votes received and verified: 146				

Role GA28	Candidate	In favor	Against	Votes Abstentions
Regional Coordinator – Asia Pacific	Narudee Kiengsiri	113	25	9
Total votes received and verified: 147				
GA29				
Regional Coordinator – Europe	Anu Viks	126	18	3
Total votes received and verified: 147				
GA30				
Regional Coordinator – Latin America	Diana Barragán	85	56	9
Total votes received and verified: 150				
GA31				
Regional Coordinator – North America and the Caribbean	Dawne Williams	86	55	6
Total votes received and verified: 150				
GA32				
Young BPW representative	Tomi Odunsi	60		
	Fadina			
	Otoha Hayashi	55		
	Sheerah Yuhee	18		
	Kim			
	Benedetta	13		
	Palermo			
Total votes received and verified: 148				
Total abstentions:2				
GA33				
Chair of the Agricultural Committee	Cristina Visconti	135	10	4
Total votes received and verified: 149				
GA34				
Chair of Arts and Culture	Sher Singh	125	13	9
Total votes received and verified: 147				
GA36				
Chair of Development, Training and Employment	Francesca	77		
	Burack			
	Nasreen Mahdi	70		3
Total votes received and verified: 150				
GA37				
Chair of Health	Naglaa Lofty	77		11
	Maria de Sousa	55		
Total votes received and verified: 143				

Role	Candidate	In favor	Against	Votes Abstentions
GA38				
Chair of Environment and Sustainable Development	Angela Donato	83		
	Laurie Dameron	55		
Total votes received and verified: 148 Abstentions:10				
GA39				
Chair of Legislation	Stella Kamnitsi	76		
	Naheed Ahmed	71		
Total votes received and verified: 149 Abstentions:2				
GA40				
Chair of Projects	Naphaphen	82		
	Vejjajiva			
	Caterina Reda	58		
Total votes received and verified: 149 Abstentions:9				
GA41				
Chair of Public Relations	Dana Marcela	70		
	Sas			
	Silvia Vigatà	55		
	González			
	Stephanie Falzon	24		
Total votes received and verified: 151 Abstentions: 2				

This concluded this part of the voting and she reassured voting members that they had had an opportunity to re-vote for the two matters that had been outstanding. As was explained, one had been a human error and the other had been the prerogative of the nominee to withdraw themselves. She asked for everyone to be respectful and understanding, in the spirit of the BPW International Collect and Dr. Lena Madess Phillips, especially while so many women around the world were suffering. BPW International had to be there for those women. She would return with the results of the remaining votes in due course.

The Chief Parliamentarian congratulated the Elections Chair for her work and asked for the complete list to be shared, as some of the PowerPoint slides had omitted the candidate's name. The Elections Chair would do that as soon as possible.

Finalization of the BPW International 90th Anniversary booklet, the projects booklet and the COVID booklet

The International President thanked the Elections Chair for announcing the voting results of the new Executive and congratulated the new Executive. She wished them every success and hoped that BPW International, celebrating its 90th anniversary, would continue to empower women, meeting its objective to help women on the ground, and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals through all members' projects, advocacies and efforts across 100 countries.

BPW International 90th Anniversary booklet

The International President described these as great achievements and thanked everyone who had contributed to the BPW International 90th Anniversary Booklet. Currently, the draft contained many quotes and photographs of the founding Presidents of BPW Affiliates and clubs and Past International Presidents. This BPW International 90th anniversary booklet would be given as a gift to all participants at this Congress, so that it could be shown to stakeholders and used as an advocacy tool.

BPW International Projects booklet

Many Affiliates had contributed, to document their projects under the title of *"Contributing to the Global Agenda and to BPW International Sustainability"* and how they had been working through the Advocacy Pillars on entrepreneurship, access to market, women on Boards, financial inclusion, equal pay, STEM education, Digital Economy, ICT and innovation, women in WEPs – Women's Empowerment Principles, government and corporate procurement policies and sectoral advocacy pillars, and the Special Advocacy Pillars. Projects had encompassed all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Chief Parliamentarian reminded the International President that there was sadly little time available to discuss these booklets in detail.

BPW International COVID booklet

The International President invited further contributions to the BPW International Projects booklet and the BPW COVID response, describing what Affiliates had been doing with reference to projects addressing the SDGs or to implement COVID response plans and activities. The booklets would be finalized and circulated as a gift to commemorate this BPW International General Assembly.

Discussion on the triennium Budget – Executive Finance Officer

The International President invited the Executive Finance Officer to comment further on the proposed budget.

The Chief Parliamentarian clarified that if no questions had been asked from the floor it should be moved and issued for voting. The results would be announced at the post-Congress International Board Meeting.

BPW Australia was looking forward to the booklets described by the International President. Referring to the Budget, she had submitted some questions by email. She hoped time would be given to the Executive Finance Officer to prepare her response.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair had been detained on other business the previous afternoon, so did not participate in the debate on the accounts. She pointed out that the triennial accounts presented by the Executive Finance Officer in Session 7 had not been moved or seconded so remained to be dealt with.

There was also a motion pending on the floor, proposed by the First Vice President - Membership but the Seconder Past International president Liz Benham had not been recognized in the order of speakers and allowed to speak. The motion was that: *"The financial reports as presented cannot be approved until a full set of accounts is supplied, as requested, including the actual versus Budget for 2018 – 2019 and 2020"*.

Also the past Finance Director Roshan Strange had circulated an email a few hours previously which answered some of the questions in Session 7.

The International President asked the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair to indicate where in the Constitution or governance documents required a full set of accounts to be produced. The financial information had been published in the Workbook pursuant to the Procedure Manual and all the last trienniums.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair reiterated that BPW Australia had pending questions and there were other questions to raise on financial matters. The General Assembly did not feel these had been fully addressed and to have a motion put on the floor without enabling it to be seconded and presented to the meeting was contrary to the Constitution.

The International President repeated her question. BPW Australia had asked for items to be amended in the Budget and the Executive Finance Officer would be considering that. So that was the subject under discussion. The information requested by the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair was not required according to the Procedure Manual.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair felt that anyone with experience of business would not agree this was the way to conduct financial matters. If there is a motion on the table, there had to be a mover and a seconder and agreement had to be sought. If it were to be put out for voting, those things needed to happen beforehand.

Point of information

The Executive Secretary read out the duties of the Executive Finance Officer as listed in section 2.3.6 of the Procedure Manual. *"The Executive Finance Officer during her term [...] ensures appropriate personnel*

- *Prepare monthly financial statements (not received)*
- *Prepare statements of expenses (not received)*
- *Prepare monthly reports of dues received and forward this to the Executive, including the Vice President Membership and Regional Coordinators to work with Affiliates and regions.*
- *Send invoices for the payment of dues [...]*
- *Keep account of the purchase and sale of BPW merchandise and services"*

The Executive Secretary added that it had been the accountant who had sent out the invoices for the payment of dues. The Executive had not seen the records of purchases or sales, nor had the requisite financial management team been appointed.

The Chief Parliamentarian pointed out that this was an operation by the Executive and was not required for the General Assembly.

The Executive Secretary replied that the Executive were accountable to their stakeholders and members.

The First Vice President – Membership reminded the General Assembly that she had proposed a motion on the floor 2 days previously in relation to approving the financial accounts. The motion had proposed that the financial report as presented could not be approved until a full set of accounts had been supplied, including the comparison of actuals versus Budget for 2018, 2019 and 2020. The latter had been requested repeatedly. She agreed that in the Congress Workbook for Cairo the actuals versus Budget had not been included in the Workbook because usually the Workbook was published some time before Congress. It was customary to receive a set of financial accounts from the Executive Finance Officer during Congress. She did not see how anyone with any financial knowledge could possibly approve financials without seeing the actual expense versus the Budget for the triennium so she did not believe these accounts could be approved without that information, which she had already requested twice during the General Assembly. She requested a Secunder for this motion.

The International President asked her to differentiate between the financial report and the Budget currently under discussion. The financial report had already been adopted.

The First Vice President – Membership clarified that she was referring to the Budget, which should always be presented with the actuals so there was a comparison.

The International President asked her to submit the request in writing and this would be actioned for the Budget.

Past International President Elizabeth Benham congratulated all the candidates who had been elected. Referring to the Budgets, she seconded the First Vice President – Membership's motion that the General Assembly could not and would not accept the Budgets as presented without the proper discussion. She expressed concern that not enough time had been allotted for this.

This was her 9th Congress and at every previous Congress delegates had been given the opportunity to ask questions and they had received the proper documentation. The General Assembly was the highest authority in the organization so the voices of the delegates had to be heard.

She wanted to make it clear that the Executive Finance Officer had been stating that she had done her due diligence and provided the financial audits but that was not what delegates were requesting. They had been asking for the items that the Executive Secretary had just listed from the Procedure Manual. She was very sorry that the team had not been put together to provide additional oversight.

As the Past International Presidents were permanent members of the Board and they and others had been members of the organization for many years, the International Board and the General Assembly had the authority to understand and ensure the future of the organization as per the governance, which had always been agreed by everyone in the General Assembly and the Board.

Several Past International Presidents felt there had been a lack of respect towards them, despite the value they provided and the fact that the organization rested on their shoulders. BPW International was currently extremely divided, as had never been seen before so this was a sad moment. She wanted to remind everybody to heed the words of the Collect about being kind. Delegates were not behaving like business and professional women.

BPW Ecuador agreed with the First Vice President - Membership and Past International President Elizabeth Benham that the requested financial information had not been received.

Secondly, the General Assembly had not yet addressed the fact that monies were still owed to the Young BPW coordinator for Latin America who had worked without payment even though she was owed more than USD8000.

The International President pointed out that Young BPW coordinator for Latin America had never been on the payroll of the organization and requested proof of this alleged role and that votes had been cast. The governance rules of BPW International prevented anyone being salaried if they had not been officially appointed as an employee after a vote.

The Executive Finance Officer reiterated that she had been working according to the Procedure Manual, having submitted the 2017 – 2018 –2019 financial statements to the International Board and would send the 2020 financial statement on receipt from the auditors by June 2021. She had prepared the provisional Budget according to Helsinki Congress but when the General Assembly approved the Resolution regarding the €1 increase she had had to change all the figures. This was sent to the Executive with a request for input but had not received any to date.

She had just received the email from BPW Australia and would respond directly. In response to the questions about the percentages, she could only say that this was 97% at Helsinki Congress and not 85%. She would respond to the remaining questions overnight.

BPW Spain felt that it was insufficient to refer purely to the Procedure Manual without going into further details. BPW Europe members had asked several times for her to provide the supporting documents which very important for the wellbeing of BPW International and they were entitled to receive this documentation. BPW belonged to the members and not to the Executive Finance Officer.

BPW New Zealand supported the First Vice President – Membership with regard to the query about the actual Budget versus the projected Budget. This was her third General

Assembly or Congress and at Jeju Congress, the comparison had been presented with line-by-line descriptions and explanatory notes. This had also been the procedure at Cairo Congress so she found it really disappointing that these accounts were not similar. She also commented on the apparent lack of accruals in the Budget which had a potential impact on outstanding payments. Many questions remained unanswered but the International President seemed to be leading members to believe that the questions they had submitted with regard to the Budget would be addressed and adjustments made. She asked for confirmation of the International President's intention with regard to the questions, so that it could be minuted. If changes were to be made without the approval of the General Assembly, they could not appreciate or agree to this Budget.

The Executive Finance Officer replied that the provisional Budget was similar to the provisional Budget at Cairo Congress. The provisional Budget had been prepared for the General Assembly and sent to the Executive, who were aware that the provisional Budget was a very simple provisional Budget because all the Congress funds had been used to ensure the registration fee was only €80 for each member. One of her main goals had been to deliver the General Assembly without the IT expenses, and she hoped this would happen. This was a good General Assembly, using virtual tools to save the members money, as for previous Congresses the registration fees were €700-€800. At the end of the General Assembly all the expenses would be submitted to the auditors and the final breakdown duly circulated.

The Chief Parliamentarian pointed out that there was no time left for this session but there were still items to discuss.

The International President repeated that in accordance with the BPW Constitution, the audited report would be sent when it was ready, after June or July 2021.

BPW Italy expressed her frustration about the projected budget, since it was unclear how many members there would be. For example, if BPW Italy were to leave the organization, this would represent a loss of around 10,000 members out of 28,000. She wondered if this would be the best solution as there had been much talk about non-existent problems: everyone had to discuss the issues in a calm fashion.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich agreed it was very sad to see this scenario in a General Assembly – Dr. Lena Madesin Phillips would be very disappointed. The Executive Finance Officer who denied the information or stopped the General Assembly consulting the organization's accountant were completely unprecedented. It was obvious that the members would want to hear from the accountant because the Executive Finance Officer had still not provided the requested information, even in this forum. The members needed numbers and clear, transparent accounts. She had told the Executive Finance Officer several times that she was paying for staff to do nothing. The Communication Administrator had received €1000 per month to produce one e-news every two months. She wondered how many e-news had been received, while the payments continued. According to the Procedure Manual, the Budget had to be presented after approval by the Executive and the General Assembly had the right to suspend this session until receipt of the transparent information that had been requested.

The Chief Parliamentarian asked to return to the motion that the First Vice President - Membership had moved and Past International President Liz Benham had seconded. She had understood that this was to be tabled until all the audited reports from 2020 had been completed to enable the actuals to be included in the Budget and sent to all members so they could vote on the Budget for the next triennium.

The International President wondered if this meant postponing the rest of the General Assembly until June or July when the audited Budget was received. She remembered a previous EFO, Sandra D'Souza, being asked for a budget during Congress and she had also replied that she could not present it until it had been audited. This was in compliance with the Constitution and no motion that was counter to the Constitution would be entertained: the information could not be provided before it was audited. The financial information had been presented at Cairo, Jeju and Helsinki Congress with the same format. The only thing the General Assembly could do with regard to the presented Budget was to amend the Budget lines, which were the same as in Cairo Congress.

The International President ruled that the time had passed for the discussion on these items

Report by the Chairperson of the Elections Committee

Results of the vote on GA24b and GA35b

Voting results

The voting strength was 169, with a quorum of 56.

She reiterated that one of these votes had been required due to human error and asked for the General Assembly for their understanding. The other had been required because a candidate had decided to stand and then withdraw after the voting had gone out.

GA24b

Vice President - Membership	Giuseppa Seidita, BPW Italy	79
	Pinella Bombaci, BPW Malta	71

Abstentions: 1

Total votes received and verified: 151

GA35b

Chair of Business, Trade & Technology	Paz Martín Lozano, BPW Dominican Republic	82
	Christine Walwyn, BPW St Kitts	67

Abstentions: 2

Total votes received and verified: 151

The International President thanked the Elections Chair and congratulated the new Vice President – Membership, Giuseppina Seidita and the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Business and Technology, Paz Martin.

The Timekeeper announced there was an hour and a half left in this session.

BPW USA supported the request for the information as had been stated, but politely suggested that to expedite matters the chair of the meeting should refrain from commenting at length during each intervention. She cited paragraph 7 of the Standing Orders: *"The Chairperson (including the President) cannot take part in a discussion or*

speak for or against a motion or resolution". She asked the President to allow the members of the General Assembly who had a right to speak to do so, as her commentary may unwittingly guide voting members in their decision-making.

The International President replied that she had merely been clarifying points of information.

BPW Switzerland supported the motion by the First Vice President and the question by BPW New Zealand which remained unanswered. She urged the International President to answer the question as it was very important for Delegates to know the subject and process for the forthcoming set of votes.

The Executive Finance Officer repeated that she was working in accordance with the Procedure Manual, so had submitted the documents as specified. The 2020 statement would be sent to the Board post-auditing by June 2021 and this was in line with previous Congresses, where the EFO or Finance Director had prepared the provisional Budget in the same way. During the triennium it was possible to change the lines of Budget in order to adapt the evolving situation. Her Budget was prepared to reflect the actual number of members.

BPW Jordan asked to be able to address the meeting in Arabic but the International President pointed out that there was no simultaneous interpreting provided as it was not one of BPW International's official languages. BPW Jordan continued in English. She was dismayed to observe the lack of mutual trust between Board members, especially as they had been elected by the members. She called for respect as the current interactions were undermining the BPW vision, mission and objectives. If the Board were having problems, the best solution would be for a well-established firm of auditors to review the accounts for this and the previous three triennia.

The Chief Parliamentarian asked to share her screen to clarify the various threads of discussion for the members. There had been comments on the way the Budget had been presented and some had indicated this was not standard practice. She shared a presentation of the way in which the propose budget for the 2017-2020 triennium had been presented for Cairo Congress. The Income and Expenditure items were shown in 4 columns headed "Approved budget 2017" and "Proposed budget 2018", "Proposed budget 2019" and "Proposed budget 2020" respectively. No actuals were shown. This had also been the case for the Approved Triennium Budget 2014 – 2017, as presented at Jeju Congress – again, no actuals were shown.

The International President thanked the Chief Parliamentarian for confirming that the 2020–2023 Budget had been presented in the same way as at Cairo and as Helsinki Congresses.

Given this clarification from the Parliamentarian on how the Budget had been approved previously, the International President moved to the next item on the Agenda.

Acknowledgement speech by the outgoing International President

So it is very difficult, it's very difficult, because, my dear sisters, this is the time that we really come together to acknowledge the past three years, to acknowledge the triennium that has passed, to acknowledge a triennium that was very challenging, as the leader elected by the General Assembly in Cairo Congress, with an Executive to support all the efforts of BPW International. It has been an honor for me to be leading this international organization of BPW International. A great honor, because BPW International has now celebrated its 90th anniversary. There were a lot of challenges that I was not expecting because in our Collect, in our Constitution, in all our governance documents this was an organization that is inclusive with no discrimination. An organization that is building the bridges of cultures, an organization that is embracing all of us on an equal basis with no discrimination whatsoever – color, religion, language. An organization that we as BPW International are proud to belong to. An organization that Dr. Lena Madesin Philips was proud to have started in Geneva but had hoped to bring it to Arab countries also.

It has been a very difficult triennium but a very, very joyful triennium also. I have travelled to many places, more than 38 countries with a BPW International presence. I have travelled to rural places, I have travelled to the places that I have seen schools, the shelters, the shelters that women were abused. I have seen agricultural projects that women have done. I have witnessed the great projects of BPW International. I have attended many candle lighting ceremonies. I have seen how this organization has a lot of potential to bring people together, to mobilize projects on the ground. Our role, dear sisters, is to come together to get our women on the ground, to leave no woman behind. This is the core business of our organization. I have been privileged to lead this organization for the last three years. I have seen people struggling for existence. I have seen young ladies who want to start their careers. I have seen women who are cultivating their land by themselves but I have also seen the great efforts that you as BPW International coming together and changing the narrative.

For those who have seen my candle lighting ceremonies, I was talking about us as game-changers to change the narrative. It was said that I was the first woman to go to London to search for the head office of BPW International and started this. I have been serving this organization for more than 20 years and I am proud to belong to this organization, which is very dear to my heart but as we have been witnessing there are also centers of power in this organization. It is time for all of us to be free, with no culture of fear. This is not our organization, our organization is to be free, our organization is democratic, our organization is to come together to empower women. There is nobody who is perfect, but the main role of our organization is to help each other. To empower each other, to help each other and not to destroy each other or fight with each other.

My second message was about "raise your hand and go ahead", do not let anybody pull you down. Don't let anybody undermine your confidence. BPW International is all about building self-confidence and self-esteem, helping those who need help.

My third message for candle lighting was about the BPW we want. The BPW we want which was coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the UN. Still, there is some discrimination in this organization, unfortunately. Still till now I have witnessed some members trying to discredit some others. This is not BPW International! The BPW we want is an organization that does not have double standards. An organization that does not discriminate about culture, about religion, about language, or about any ethnicity. An organization in which all of us are equal and free and nobody is without mistakes. Some people make mistakes and that is

exactly why we are here as BPW International to help each other and empower each other and leave no woman behind.

I would have loved to have this as a physical Congress in order to hug you all. All of you know that I am a person that loves and have joy, and have fun but in those three years while I had some fun, I didn't smile a lot, I had a lot of challenges. I hope for the next Executive that they'll be working together. Our International Leadership that we elected with a democratic election to come together and lead this organization for the best. I had a lot of dreams for this organization and thank God I have already achieved many of them. The legacy of this organization is about contributing to the Global Agenda. Now all of you be proud of yourselves, be proud of your organization. The contribution your projects made to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals is documented in our booklet. We also produced one about COVID and another to commemorate our 90th anniversary: all these documents are yours and they are interactive. I have really had the honor to lead this organization. I had the honor to love you all. I love you all, dear sisters, from all of my heart. I went with you everywhere. I have been stuck between India and Pakistan during the tension between India and Pakistan but my sisters in Pakistan were assuring me that I will go home safely. I was stuck in different parts of the world. I enjoyed very much lots of your projects, your candle lighting ceremonies, and this is the spirit of BPW International. This is the real spirit. I really talk to you from your inside, this is the real spirit of BPW International. Please put hate things aside and as Dr. Lena Madesin Philips said peace, peace and social justice as my candle lighting ceremony of yesterday and this year. Peace and social justice because the peace cannot happen without social justice. Social justice is about equality, it is about non-discrimination, it is about helping each other and this is the real social justice that Dr. Lena Madesin Philips was dreaming of. It is very, very, very important that all of us as custodians for this organization come together and have peace and work together in collaboration. Under the new leadership that we have already elected. We do not have to have now the vision and I am very happy that I was able to put my fingerprints, or put my legacy of this triennium about Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you for those who are smiling either mocking or smiling for me because all those who gave lot of us, they gave me strength whether they said right things or wrong things, they gave me more strength. They gave me more power to fight, to fight for equality, to fight for the justice, to fight for the women. It is not about the position it is about leading our organization that has the history of BPW International. It has been a great, great, great history, it has been a great organization, and I am so happy that my triennium is coming to an end today. To be free!

I want to acknowledge my family whom I have been away from three years, three years away from my family. My daughter now she is a qualified doctor and fighting in the hospital yesterday with COVID. My other boy he is in his 5th year of medical school, my younger boy he is in his 2nd year of medical school. Thank God that they are fighting with me for gender equality. My daughter is fighting against FGM and violence against women. My husband, my thanks to him, I have been away from my family for three years, three years trying to empower the women and giving all of you. Thank you for helping with everything so it has been an honor and I acknowledge all those who helped me during my triennium.

My Executive, of course, there was opinions that are different in opinions but that's how it is and should be. But, the best thing is that when we had differing opinion we can respect each other. Respect without any defamation, without any accusation. So I really wish the next Executive will be homogenous and help each other. I really wish to acknowledge from my Executive all those who supported me. I thank Catherine, I thank Giuseppina, I thank Narudee, I thank Pinella, I thank Dawne, Diana and all, all Neelima she did a great job

Neelima, thank you Neelima. All the Executive who have really, Executive Secretary, Bessie Hironimus I know there were differences in opinions but it is very important to understand that this organization will not be let down, this organization is depending on all of us. And I acknowledge all of my mentors, acknowledge everybody who supported me during my triennium. I thank you all I think it is, it was a great, great, great challenge and a great, great joy to be with all of you. Thank you and I think it is very...thank you very much and thank you for my great, great, great sisters from all over the world. I acknowledge I come from Africa and I thank my African sisters who have supported me. It is the first time in the world than an African leader comes and I am also happy and so humble to be coming and representing my region. Thank you very, very, very much. It has been a great honor to serve this organization.

Installation of the new International President, Dr. Catherine Bosshart

The outgoing International President introduced Dr. Catherine Bosshart as the new President of BPW International, and looked forward to being able to present her with the chain of office at the earliest opportunity.

International President's address

*Dear BPW, our first virtual General Assembly was for all of us not only a technical, but also a social challenge. We had only a little time to tackle the huge task to organize a virtual Congress. I would like to thank International President for her commitment and the International Planning Committee for its work. The last two weeks before General Assembly we had virtual meetings together every day or even twice every day. The Planning Committee consisted of Drs. Asfour, Seidita, Viravan, Kiengsiri and myself. Thank you all for having confidence in me and giving me your vote. Those members who are disappointed, I would like to ask you to give me a chance and to collaborate with me. I will be available for all members and I am willing to support you in all your endeavors for the benefit of BPW International. Thank you for being still online and motivated to face the next triennium. I am full of energy and you too, I presume. Let us work together along with the new international theme, "**New actions through cooperation**". It includes the one we had the last triennium and the Sustainable Development Goals are big part of the actions.*

As mentioned in my promotion video let's talk on the three topics: finances, administration and communication. Number one finances. Let's increase our financial resources not by increasing our membership dues but by increasing our membership. I encourage each federation and club to make a special effort in the new triennium. My personal financial effort will be the reduction of the Budget of €80,000 for the President for her travels specifically to €50,000 per year. I will explain to you in my forthcoming words why. With pleasure, I will visit federations and clubs but I will also send video statements and will have exchanges with members like Question & Answer sessions by using our new digital tools. We urgently have to reactivate our Friends and Fellows and establish professional sponsoring. Members who are experienced professional fund raisers please contact your President's Office by email. We need your help.

Secondly the administration. As a voluntary working organization, our officers and experts have to be supported by paid and therefore reliable administrators. BPW International, founded in 1930, has to renew and optimize its structures in an ongoing process. Today websites are not only representation tools but important working tools as well. The successful production and use of webinars and website tools is vital for our worldwide and multifaceted work. A paid administration later will be necessary for this work as well.

*Thirdly communication. Due to the COVID pandemic BPW International was forced to organize the virtual Congress. A big, big thank you to all who made this huge challenge possible and a thank you to all of you who attended this first digital Congress. Today, the latest digital tools are indispensable but not sufficient for good communication. Relevant and valuable content is imperative. As promised, together with the team, I will provide BPW International news each month. I encourage the federations and associated clubs to send contributions to the President's Office. Please send us your experiences with this new virtual General Assembly. You will get the first edition of the newsletter in this term at the beginning of May 2021. Our international theme, "**New actions through cooperation**" does not only focus on activities or actions it means to include the efforts for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals as well as to have a focus on common cooperation. Different opinions are desirable and enriching and have to be exchanged on a fact-based level. Members of an organization like BPW International whose goal is empowerment of women have to become role models for a respectful togetherness and the art of cooperation. Being able to have a good culture of cooperation between us women means to be able to cooperate with men and our society too. Let's focus on new actions and equally on a good culture of cooperation. Therefore, I invite you all, all our BPW around the globe to work on our new international theme, "**New actions through cooperation**".*

If you permit me, I would like to send also a short message to my well-loved BPW Federation in Taiwan who are part of my family.

The new President's Office 2021 to 2024 will be active from 1st May 2021 but emails to the President's Office will reach me at any time. I expect your cooperation and thank you for all your new actions".

The International President invited the Elections Chair to make some comments.

The Elections Chair congratulated the incoming Executive and everyone in attendance for their patience during this long, challenging week. Turning to the International Board Meeting scheduled for the next day, she explained that the voting platform would revert to the previous International Board platform. The newly elected Committee Chairs would each have a voting right, the newly elected Executive not previously on the 2017 – 2020 Executive would have one vote each. Usernames and passwords for voting would be sent out. The former Executive who were not elected for the triennium would no longer have a voting right and the deadline for BPW Affiliates to change their voting Delegates had passed on March 29. So, everyone who had received their details and credentials would be able to vote. There were two votes per Federation, one vote per Affiliate club, one vote per Associate, one per Executive member, one per Past International President and one for each Standing Committee.

She extended her thanks to the members of the Elections Committee:

- Eziokwu Egbuka, Africa
- Marion Volk, Europe
- Fior Ranucoli, Latin America
- Sheila Crook, North America & the Caribbean

She gave particular thanks to Marion and Sheila who had exceeded their remit. She was also grateful to Past International President Dr. Nok Viravan who had been very supportive, to Deon for her hard work and the whole IT Team. She was also grateful to her mentor CAC Chair Sylvia Perry and Chief Parliamentarian Carolyn Savage who had really helped her throughout this challenging series of sessions. She would re-issue all

the reports to ensure they were absolutely correct and all details were included, although they would also be put on the website.

The International President invited the incoming members of the Executive to make short statements to the meeting.

Chularat Israngkool Na Ayutthaya (Toyting), Vice President — UN congratulated her colleagues and thanked BPW members. She was very proud to be a member of the BPW family and invited members to work with her.

The Chief Parliamentarian pointed out that a vote was required to determine who would be First and Second Vice Presidents. The Vice Presidents — UN and Membership had been confirmed but there had not been a vote to determine which was First Vice President.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan said that historically, when voting for both Vice Presidents at the same time, the person receiving the higher number of votes became the first Vice President.

The Chief Parliamentarian disagreed as she believed a vote was required for First and Second Vice Presidents as there had been a number of members standing for both roles. The Past International President wondered how it would be possible to hold a vote without ending this session beforehand. The Chief Parliamentarian replied that it would be necessary to have a mover and seconder for the votes to be accepted and presented at the post Congress International Board Meeting. Notification to that effect would have to be circulated from the President's Office with the new President's message.

The Past International President offered to ask the IT team to open the vote for 12 hours for members to choose who would be the First Vice President. Then the result would be announced at the post Congress International Board Meeting.

The Elections Committee Chair had also understood that the person receiving the most votes became the first Vice President.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee agreed that there had to be a vote because the votes for the two Vice Presidents had not taken place in the same voting sessions.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan recommended that the Elections Chair present the information about the new voting platform to avoid confusion about the Vice Presidents. The previous voting platform would change from BPWInternational.org-GA-online-voting to BPWInternational.org-online-voting and voting delegates would have new user names and passwords.

The International President asked Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan to send a written summary to the International Board Delegates so that they were clear on how to proceed with the new vote.

To clarify the process for the voting delegates, the Elections Chair quoted from the Procedure Manual *"8.4.3 Determination of election results. When two Vice Presidents have been elected a further vote will be taken to determine who will be First (1st) Vice President"*

and Second (2nd) Vice President. The Vice President with the most votes is the First (1st) Vice President and the other is the Second (2nd) Vice President”.

Greeting messages from the new Executive

Vice President – Membership Dr. Giuseppina Seidita thanked everyone and congratulated the Past International President Dr. Amany Asfour for her work. She had worked with the new International President Dr. Catherine Bosshart during the last triennium and was sure this new Executive would work in peace and sisterhood to promote, to serve and to motivate because in her opinion the opportunity for the members to serve and deliver projects around the world was the main tool. Being a member of BPW International meant having the opportunity to change ideas, to change projects and to work with other members in many parts of the world. She herself had served with passion which was vital for BPW International to succeed.

Executive Finance Officer, Eufemia Ippolito said she was honored to be part of the BPW International Executive 2021 – 2024. As she had pointed out in her presentation earlier, she would manage the Budget effectively and efficiently, ensuring that the bookkeeping remained transparent. As a lawyer, she always took decisions on documentary evidence. She congratulated the new International President Dr. Catherine Bosshart and thanked Immediate Past International President Dr. Amany Asfour for her dedication. In conclusion, she expressed her appreciation to the President and Board of BPW Italy for their support.

Young BPW Representative – Tomi Odunsi Fadina thanked everyone for putting their confidence in her, including the President of BPW Nigeria.

Regional Coordinator – Asia Pacific, Dr. Narudee Kiengsiri took the opportunity to thank everyone who had voted for her and also thanked the Immediate Past International President and members of the Executive Board from the previous triennium. Despite their ups and downs, she felt they had all remained friends. She continued by expressing her appreciation of her Sub-Regional Coordinators: Carolyn Savage from Oceania, Chularat Israngkool Na Ayutthaya from ASEAN, Catherina (Hyun) Park from East Asia, Her Royal Highness Dr. Hissah Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah from West Asia and Nasreen Mahdi from South Asia. They had all achieved much together and she looked forward to working with them all again to contribute much to BPW International, along with the other regions. She concluded by sharing a saying that she had just discovered: *“today is the first day of the rest of our lives”* and urged everyone to forget the past and move together in a positive spirit.

Regional Coordinator – Europe, Anu Viks expressed her thanks especially to the European members for their trust in her and thanked everyone who had voted for her. She promised to work for her European members and deliver the Program she had already presented for BPW Europe, the largest region in BPW International and one that was active in supporting and empowering women. There was much to do together and she also hoped that the next triennium would be a better one in every sense and that members would again be able to travel to meet each other. She also valued the benefits of Zoom and other web-based communication tools. Her main vision for the future was for young BPW members who would carry on the organization.

The International President wanted to continue with the introduction of the Executive and hoped that the Regional Coordinator would work hard for BPW International, not just for Europe.

Regional Coordinator – Latin America, Diana Barragán thanked everyone who had voted for her. She intended to meet their expectations as she had tried to do in the previous triennium, especially in her region. She particularly acknowledged the outgoing First Vice President – Membership Susan Jones who had not been mentioned in the acknowledgments. She had worked incredibly hard during this triennium and had been a great colleague, supporting all the regions as they strove to serve the members. She was very pleased to be able to work after the pandemic with the region to make it grow, to travel more open more clubs and catch up on everything that it had not been possible to arrange in the past triennium. She was looking forward to collaborating with her new colleagues.

Regional Coordinator – North America and the Caribbean, Dawne Williams congratulated all the new Executive and her outgoing colleagues, wishing them all the very best. This was a road of new beginnings and new beginnings always had new opportunities, learning from the past to make a greater future for all those who still believed in BPW.

Executive Secretary Jenny Gulamani-Abdulla was grateful for the opportunity to address the attendees at the General Assembly, many of whom may have remembered her as BPW Canada President. She thanked everyone for their votes and confidence, and looked forward to working with the incoming Board and outgoing Executive Secretary Bessie Hironymous during the transition.

BPW Finland spoke as a young member, asking the International President to address the letter of concern that had been submitted by various young members either during this Session or at the post General Assembly International Board Meeting.

The International President had already responded to the former Young BPW representative, indicating that the letter would be considered by the Executive and an extensive response would follow.

BPW Spain pointed out that there was a motion from BPW Malta on the table which she had seconded but which had not yet been addressed. An urgent response was needed from the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair with regard to an audit of the voting.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair had not seen this request in the day's emails to date, but the International President reminded her that the motion had been tabled at a previous session of the General Assembly.

The Chief Parliamentarian agreed, that the motion requested an audit of the original votes. The Parliamentarians and the Constitutional Advisory Committee had reviewed the information received and believed that the elections stood as they were presented.

The Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair added that they had indeed both engaged in looking at a potential audit of the votes and she was under the impression that the decision had been announced regarding the audit. She agreed with BPW Malta in that an audit was much more than checking a spreadsheet, but she confirmed that having

reviewed the credentials, the number of votes and delegations, all was in order. So beyond that she did not know what further checks could be conducted. The credentials matched the votes.

BPW Malta began by congratulating the new Executive and hoped everyone would have a much better experience than in the previous few days, which had made an impact on many of those who were attending this as their first General Assembly. She had expected much better than this. She continued by explaining that an audit was not a verification of the number of votes submitted, rather a verification in the system that there had been no duplicate votes and that the votes as reported for the results had been those submitted by the Delegates. She also wanted verification of the first votes, which should still be in the system.

She wanted an explanation as to why there had been an extension. At the time, the General Assembly was told that some Delegates had been confused, so the voting time was extended but she did not feel this was a justifiable reason. Looking at the BPW International Constitution and the information presented in the emails, once a vote was cast, it was not possible to change it. She also wanted an independent technology forensic auditor to conduct an audit to make sure that the information was still there. She asked the incoming Executive and International President to make sure that all the data was maintained and not destroyed going forward because under Swiss Law and international law in general, data should not be destroyed for a number of years (10 years under Swiss Law).

Point of order

The Chief Parliamentarian affirmed that the BPW Constitution and BPW Standing Rules applied and provided a very clear process. She acknowledged the previous speaker but this General Assembly had been unusual because normally the votes were shown in front of everyone, on a big screen and the meeting would be asked at the end of the General Assembly for permission to destroy any paper ballots. The Delegate had asked for an audit on the security voting system and this had been completed. Everything was in compliance with the Standing Orders as approved by the members.

In response to the question by the International President, the Chief Parliamentarian viewed the comments by BPW Malta as a recommendation, however the decision to commission an independent audit lay with the Assembly. The Swiss Law had already been explained by BPW Switzerland and it specified that all decisions were with the General Assembly.

The International President was also familiar with Swiss Law so agreed that the General Assembly would have to vote.

Past international President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan added that many people considered themselves as computer experts, but each system was different and in this case, once the voting of the first batch was complete and the Scrutineers had completed their review, it was overwritten with the voting from the second batch, and so on. Also, following the direct order from the General Assembly to destroy the votes without even the Scrutineers seeing the data, it had been erased.

Past International President Dr. Yasmin Darwich congratulated the new Executive and urged them to start by restoring peace and ensuring transparency in all their actions. She expressed concern about the Swiss Code potentially declaring this General Assembly null and void, and the resignation of the accountant because she refused to present a false finance report.

The International President felt that the priority would be to finalize the Congress accounts which had not been provided previously.

Presentation of the new Regional Coordinator – Africa

Hadia Gondji (BPW Ethiopia Addis Ababa) was looking forward to serving the members and working together with the rest of the Executive team.

Point of information

The outgoing Executive Secretary congratulated the new Executive and offered her continuing support. She requested the Credentials Report for the day's session. She also wanted to clarify that the Assistant Executive Secretary had been on the payroll from 2017 until 2019, when the Immediate Past President had stopped this arrangement because the Assistant Executive Secretary had worked for Past President Dr. Yasmin Darwich in the previous term.

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan confirmed that the Credentials Report had been listed on the Agenda but had accidentally been overlooked.

Credentials report

The Credentials congratulated the new team and presented her report for Session 6 on March 30.

Executive Board Members	11
Past International Presidents	7
Delegates	121 from 38 Federations
	30 from countries with associated clubs
Total voting strength	169

Attendees at GA Session 7 on March 28, 2021

The Credentials Chairperson reported as follows:

Executive Board Members	11
Past International Presidents	7
Voting Delegates, alternate Delegates and special Delegates	156
Observers	62
Total attendees	174

The Credentials Chair confirmed that she would email these reports for the Proceedings.

Voting arrangements for First Vice President

Past International President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan had been asked to make this announcement as the Elections Chairperson was having computer problems. The voting would begin after this session at 1700 hours UTC and at 5am UTC on March 31, 2021.

The International President thanked her and the IT team for making this possible. She congratulated all the new Executive members and Standing Committee Chairs and looked forward to working with them all.

Announcement of the 77th BPW International Board Meeting

The International President announced this would take place the next day from 14:00 hours UTC to 16:00 UTC. She asked the former Executive Secretary to present the Minutes of the 76th BPW Board Meeting and the Constitutional Advisory Committee Chair to present the amendments to the Procedure Manual, to incorporate the agreed changes. She thanked the Timekeepers and closed the meeting.