**Report of the IASSW Committee on Disaster Interventions, Sustainability and Climate Change: Update for the January 2018 meeting**

The Committee has had limited activities since the last report in July 2017. The main one of these was the representation at the UNFCCC (United Nations Convention Framework on Climate Change) in its COP23 (Conference of the Parties) in Bonn from6-16 November 2017 in Bonn, Germany by the Chair of the Committee, Professor Lena Dominelli. The COP23 meeting was presided over by Fiji who was responsible for organising the event and holding the Presidency. But because Fiji, a small island nation in the Pacific Ocean, had no facilities large enough to host the meeting there, it was held in Bonn, Germany, where the UNFCCC is based.

Another action was the holding of a side-event, also organised by Lena Dominelli, and at the Fiji Pavilion held on 13 November 2017. The event was held in the Fiji Pavilion itself, and lasted for one and one-half hours. The side event consisted of a workshop entitled, the *Social Dimensions of Climate Change Disasters: Gender, Marginalisation and Empowement*. It had three contributors: Dr Julie Drolet from the University of Calgary in Edmonton, Canada who spoke on the topic of social work interventions in wild (forest) fires in Fort McMurray in Alberta, Canada. She highlighted the many roles that social workers play, and how forest fires are increasing in frequency and intensity given the hotter, drier summers being attributed to climate change. Julie was followed by Lena Dominelli who unpacked the social dimensions of climate change disasters and the diverse activities that comprise the many roles that social workers undertake in such circumstances. She gave prominence to the importance of identifying particular vulnerable groups, e.g., women, and how social workers, through their activities pick up on their differentiated experiences of disasters to empower them and their communities through actions that mobilise existing resources and find additional ones to mitigate risk and build resilience. Lena’s contribution was succeeded by a video provided by Professor Nino Zganec who talked about green social work. He spoke passionately about the importance of green social work and the need for it becoming mainstreamed by being taught on all social work courses. The questions that followed the presentations were extremely interesting. One asked why more people were not aware of social work’s role in climate change activities.

Lena had intended to organise an exhibition in the workshop hall, but unfortunately, her request for material was unfulfilled, except for one photo from Professor Mildred Mushanje from the University of Zimbabwe in Harare. This was about a woman who had been empowered by social workers to survive a drought and grow better crops by harvesting rainwater.

Lena and Julie attended several other side events. One of these which highlighted the experiences of indigenous people was extremely powerful in portraying their exploitation for the mineral resources and lands that they held and the resistance they were offering to assert their rights to land and other resources that had been traditionally theirs. Lena mentioned that IASSW members support indigenous rights through research and education that explores complex relationships, and by adhering to the UN Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (along with all UN Conventions).

The next COP24 meeting will be in Europe, in Warsaw, Poland. The date is 3-14 December 2018. As further information comes out, much later this year, the Chair of this Committee will send it on, so that Board members can become more involved in planning a side event there.

Respectfully submitted

Lena Dominelli

Chair, IASSW Committee on Disaster Interventions, Sustainability and Climate Change

5 January 2018.