

Bill Kidd MSP

Glasgow Anniesland



Dr Gari Donn
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Bill Kidd MSP Endorsement of Scottish Preparatory Conference Report

Dear Gari,

Thank you for sending me a copy of the *63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women: Scottish Preparatory Conference Report*. The work done by United Nations House Scotland, Soroptimists International and the Scottish Women's Convention to bring together Scottish civil society groups to deliberate on this important issue is commendable. In my capacity as an MSP, I have had the privilege to work with civil society groups who are championing the rights and status of women in Scotland. In the Scottish Parliament, we discuss and debate matters that are pertinent to women, including equity and access to rights. In February 2019, I participated in a Members' Business debate hosted by Gail Ross MSP on workplace protections for women who are victims of domestic violence. It is clear to me that women's rights is still a live issue- one that needs to be addressed.

Receiving the preparatory conference report was a particularly insightful guide to the experiences of women across Scotland in accessing social protections, specifically in housing and health. The communique from conference participants brings light to many matters that, I believe, would be relevant to any country. Whilst some matters (like Universal Credit) are specific to the UK, salient points and lessons learned from this should still be communicated to the larger international community. All heads of state will make decisions regarding welfare and social protections: it is their imperative that they consider whether domestic policies promote access to human rights. This point is crucial.

The United Nations has noticed the matter of the detrimental impact of Universal Credit, and I found the findings of the UN Special Rapporteur of Human Rights and Extreme Poverty, Philip Alston, poignant and saddening. As one of the richest countries in the world, we should not have people relying on foodbanks and children living in poverty. This is unacceptable. I am very glad that the communique to the United Nations reinforces that Universal Credit does not currently meet the needs of individuals or advance an individual's human right to housing and health.

I also note that the report emphasises the role of Government spending in advancing women's access to their human rights. The report emphasises that women would often rather have money

spent on community needs such as health, housing and welfare instead of expenses such as defence. You will know that I, as a long-time advocate for the total disarmament and elimination of nuclear weapons, wholeheartedly endorse this position. This anti-nuclear position is widespread across the people of Scotland and the Scottish Parliament. Nuclear weapon spending constitutes a tremendous waste of resources. Weapons of this indiscriminate nature, if used ever again, would result in irrevocable damage to hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians. As you will be aware, the ongoing 'Move the Nuclear Weapons Money' campaign advocates for the One Trillion Dollars (that is being spent to modernise nuclear arsenals in nine countries over the next ten years) to be reallocated to efforts promoting peace.

The United Nations plays a crucial role in setting international norms and standards that resonate and reverberate throughout the world. I'm very pleased to know that United Nations House Scotland, Soroptimists International and the Scottish Women's Convention are leading the way in ensuring that expertise from civil society groups, NGOs and groups of women are heard at the highest level. This type of communication between high-level actors and grassroots organisations plays an important part of ensuring relevance and representation from Scottish women and civil society.

I welcome the *63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women: Scottish Preparatory Conference Report* and endorse efforts made to advance women's access to human rights and social protections across the length and breadth of Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Kidd". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

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