

A Review on the Non-government Diplomacy of All-China Women's Federation (1949-2018)

Hongyan Wang

*School of Ethnology and Sociology, Inner Mongolia University, Hohhot China
Email: wanghongyannd207@imu.edu.cn*

ABSTRACT. *Over the past 70 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the non-government of All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) has undergone three stages characterized by "Antiwar and safeguarding world peace" in early days of the People's Republic of China, "women-centered non-government aimed to promote women's development" after the reform and opening up, and "people-to-people diplomacy" since the 21st century. ACWF deals with diplomatic affairs by always obeying the national diplomacy and has accumulated valuable experience in promoting the friendly cooperation of Chinese and foreign women, maintaining world peace and advancing its construction. Under the new era, ACWF's external contact function should be researched further.*

KEYWORDS: *ACWF's Functions; ACWF; Non-government Diplomacy*

1. Introduction

It was put forward in the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee that "promote the construction of foreign-related systems and mechanisms in a deep way, pursue balanced external contacts among the Party, NPC, government, CPPCC, armed forces, local government, people's organizations, etc., and strengthen the great collaborative pattern under which the Party commands the overall situation and coordinates the efforts of all quarters in diplomacy affairs". As one of the important non-governmental diplomatic groups in the early stage of the People's Republic of China^[1], ACWF has played a significant role in China's external exchange, serving as a distinct player in the relations of the Party and the State with foreign women and international women's organizations during China's different historical periods over the past 70 years. In the report of the 12th National Women's Congress of China in 2018, ACWF's non-government diplomacy was further scaled to a new height of "leading women to make new contributions to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind" and "laying a solid foundation of public support under the national mechanism to promote the healthy

and steady development of national relations”, signifying a new height of ACWF’s non-government diplomacy. Over these 70 years, how to change ACWF’s non-government diplomacy becomes a realistic issue that should be solved urgently in the current research of women’s federation organization.

Taking the contents of the non-government diplomacy of ACWF in the 12 work reports of national women’s congresses of China from 1949 to 2018 as the main analysis object, this paper sorts out women’s diplomatic history of ACWF in these 70 years.

2. Development History of ACWF’s Non-government Diplomacy over the Past 70 Years^[2]

2.1 Antiwar and Safeguarding World Peace (1949-1957)

2.1.1 Main tasks of ACWF’s Non-Government Diplomacy

From the founding of the People’s Republic of China to 1957, ACWF’s non-government diplomatic tasks were mainly in the following three aspects: 1). Strength the contact with international women’s democratic movement and build a firm front in partnership with world’s democratic movement to safeguard world peace; 2). Highlight women’s friendship and solidarity of the socialist countries led by the Soviet Union and Asian, Africans and Latin American countries; 3). Emphasize the work for special populations in safeguarding world peace, for example, uniting international friends and caring and supporting all work of oppressed women for freedom and equality.

2.1.2 Main Achievements of ACWF’s non-government Diplomacy

In the early stage of the People’s Republic of China, ACWF obtained preliminary achievements in promoting exchange between Chinese and foreign women and contacting international women’s organizations.

In terms of promoting the exchange between Chinese and foreign women, ACWF established external contact with the women from 53 countries in 1952^[3]. As of 1957, it had received 458 foreign guests from 60 countries and dispatched 121 Chinese women’s representatives to 13 countries for friendly visit^[4].

From the founding of the People’s Republic of China to 1957, ACWF kept in touch with the Women International Democratic Federation (WIDF) only and participated in international group activities below: Support and participate in the international antiwar and international women’s peace movements; participate in the campaign to resist American aggression and aid the DPRK, peace declaration, the campaign on requesting the five major powers to sign peace treaty and other activities safeguarding the world peace and women’s and children’s rights; dispatch

145 representatives to attend 16 international women's assemblies in different scales with different natures and respond to and support the three justice calls proposed by WIDF: comprehensively reduce the armament, completely prohibit atomic and thermonuclear weapons and immediately stop hydrogen bomb test.

2.2 Non-government Diplomacy Centered on Women's Development(1978 – 1998)

2.2.1 Main Tasks of ACWF's Non-government Diplomacy

Since the reform and opening up, ACWF underwent remarkable changes in terms of the objects, themes and international organization participation in its non-government diplomacy.

It has expanded its exchange objects from the women from socialist countries to the women of the surrounding countries, developing countries, third world countries, second world countries and other countries in the world. For example, as proposed in the 4th National Women's Congress of China, "the emphases of contact are "two strengthening and one enhancing", i.e. strengthening the close solidarity and mutual support and learning with women of socialist countries and the solidarity, cooperation and friendly contact with the women of third world countries and enhance the mutual understanding and friendship with women from the second world countries. The 5th National Women's Congress of China included the understanding and friendship with women of Japan and countries in Europe, North America and Oceania on the basis of the diplomatic objects raised in the 4th National Women's Congress of China. According to the requirements proposed in the 6th National Women's Congress of China, "ACWF should abide by the foreign policy of independence, self-reliance and peace, expand the friendly contact with women from the countries around the world further and participate in international peaceful and friendship activities in women's circle. In the 7th National Women's Congress of China, it was proposed to publicize China that was implementing the reform and opening up and the advancing Chinese women in external exchange under the premise of including ACWF's non-government diplomatic object in the opening up. As raised in the 8th National Women's Congress of China, ACWF should form a global vision and give full play to non-government Diplomacy advantages; develop the friendship and cooperation with women from surrounding countries, particularly those from developing countries intensively and strengthen the contact and exchange with women from developed countries further.

The ACWF's non-government diplomacy content was transformed from antiwar struggle to the struggle of eliminating discrimination against women and striving for women's and children's rights and interests. The two struggles were brought forth in the 4th National Women's Congress of China. First, unite with the women in all countries against imperialism, colonialism and hegemony to struggle against superpower; Second, support the struggles of women from Asian, African, Latin American and Oceanian developing countries against imperialism, colonialism and hegemony and the struggles to maintain national independence, safeguard state

sovereignty and develop national economy. It was put forward in the 5th National Women's Congress of China that it was required to carry out the activities of maintaining world peace and children's and women's rights and interests further. On one hand, oppose imperialism and hegemonism, eliminate any form of discrimination against women and safeguard and strive for women's and children's rights and interests; propel the cause of human progress and make more contributions; On the other hand, firmly support the women from Asian, African and Latin American countries to oppose against colonialism, imperialism, hegemonism and racism, object to all interferences, strive for and maintain national rights and develop national economy and cultural struggle. As proposed in the 6th National Women's Congress of China, it was imperative to make efforts to maintain world peace, eliminate discrimination against women and protect, strive for women's rights and interests and participate in multilateral women's exchange activities.

Meanwhile, the cooperation with the organizations such as the UN and international women's organizations was highlighted. Developing the cooperation with relevant UN organizations for women and children work was raised in the 5th National Women's Congress of China. Three tasks were put forward in the 6th National Women's Congress of China. First, develop the contact with relevant UN organizations of women and children further and expand the international bilateral and multilateral assistance project cooperation actively with measured strokes; Second, strengthen the research on international women's movement, publicize and draw lessons from the documents approved by the UN such as Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and combine the goals of "equality, development and peace" with the cause of improving the status of Chinese women; Third, make efforts to maintain world peace, eliminate discrimination against women and safeguard and strive for women's rights and interests. Preparing for the 4th World Women Conference and holding follow-up activities were the main tasks of ACWF's non-government diplomacy of the 7th and 8th National Women's Congresses of China. As proposed in the 7th National Women's Congress of China, in light of the 4th World Women Conference that the UN would hold in September 1995 in Beijing, the main tasks of ACWF were to finish various preparatory work of the conference, and in particular, make publicity to the women in all nations and from all walks of life, mobilizing all women to be a good host and greeting the holding of conference with actual actions. As proposed in the 8th National Women's Congress of China, it was required to participate in international multilateral women's exchange activities actively and make positive efforts to promote the implementation of *Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action*, improve women's status and boost world peace and development.

2.2.2 Main Achievements of ACWF's Non-government Diplomacy

From the beginning of the reform and opening up to the end of the 20th century, ACWF was restored and rapidly expanded its contact with women and children of various countries and regions. ACWF had restored or established contract with 226

work organizations for women and children from 123 countries as of 1983 and had established friendly contact with over 550 agencies and organizations for women and children from more than 140 countries and regions as of 1998.

ACWF was more active in participating in or holding the women's activities organized by the UN and other international organizations, including: Participating in activities that relevant UN organizations implemented for women and children and attending the meetings of international women's organizations; supporting the UN's International Year of Children and Decade for Women and carrying out the corresponding activities to coordinate UN's International Year of Children and Decade for Women; participating in the whole process of World Conference on Women and successfully holding a series of important international exchange meetings such as APEC Women Leaders Network Meeting. By far, the most historic achievement in ACWF's non-government diplomacy is its participation in the preparation, successful holding and follow-up actions of the World Conference on Women. As pointed out in report of the 8th National Women's Congress of China, in 1995, the women's federations at all levels participated in the whole process of "preparing and holding the UN's 4th World Conference on Women and NGO Forum on Women, Beijing '95" in all aspects with all efforts and contributed a lot to the government's successful holding of the conference and forum and subsequent actions." In addition, ACWF made remarkable achievements in international project cooperation and external resources expansion.

2.3 Civil Diplomacy(2003-Now)

2.3.1 Main Tasks of ACWF's Non-government Diplomacy

ACWF's non-government diplomatic tasks have been transformed for twice since the new century, including the first one by which ACWF's non-government diplomacy was gradually adopted into the national diplomatic work and the advantages of women's civil diplomacy were fully exerted. To be the specific, the diplomatic task of the 9th and 10th National Women's Congress of China mainly include: 1). Highlight the exchange with world's all women and women's organizations and agencies loving peace and develop the contact and exchange with women from developed countries further; deepen the friendly cooperative relationship having been established with women from developing countries and surrounding countries and take active part in multilateral women's exchange activities and the exchange activities with relevant UN organizations and international and regional women. 2). Strive for more international cooperation projects and make new efforts to promote the development of domestic women and children; learn the useful experience of various countries in women's development, publicize the progress and development of Chinese women and make contributions to improve China's international status and display Chinese women's image. The ACWF's non-government diplomatic tasks put forward in the 11th and 12th National Women's Congresses of China were further transformed to the direction of giving play to women's exchange mechanism and cultural exchange brand under the

national exchange mechanism. On the one hand, it was put forward in the 11th National Women's Congress of China to advance and expand Chinese women's external contact at a higher level and in a larger scope and broader field and enhance the friendship with women from all countries worldwide; promote high-level dialogue of female leaders and pragmatic cooperation of female organizations both at home and abroad and implement the friendly work of enhancing trust and clarifying doubts on a targeted basis. As brought forth in the 12th National Women's Congress of China, by highlighting the construction of the Belt & Road, it was required to strengthen the exchange and dialogue with women and women's organizations along the "Belt & Road" route further and inject women's energy for closer ties among people. On the other hand, it was required to actively participate in the UN's and international women's affairs, expand the contact and cooperation with women's friendship organizations of various countries in the world and relevant UN organizations and enhance Chinese influence and discourse power on multilateral stage; participate in UN's and international and regional women's affairs in depth and improve the influence and discourse power. 3). strengthen the external communication and women's external publicity and enhance the understanding of international society on Chinese development and women's progress; create the international environment beneficial to Chinese peaceful development continuously and properly interpret the stories of the Communist Party of China, China and Chinese women.

2.3.2 Main Achievements of ACWF's Non-government Diplomacy

ACWF has established friendly contact with women from multiple countries and regions around the world since the new century. It had established friendly contact with nearly 700 organizations and agencies for women and children of 151 countries and regions as of 2003, and nearly 697 organizations for women and children of 164 countries and regions as of 2008. As a women's organization with comprehensive international influence and comprehensive external exchange nowadays, ACWF undertakes and holds the activities of relevant UN organizations and international organizations with more pragmatic actions; for instance, it has successfully held multiple women-oriented exchange activities such as the 10th anniversary meeting of UN's 4th World Conference on Women, International Forum on Women and Sustainable Development, Women and Urban Development and the 15th Anniversary Forum of the 4th World Conference on Women, Women 20, China-Arab States Women's Forum and the 1st SCO Women's Forum.

ACWF also obtains other achievements in Chinese and foreign women's exchange, such as more frequent bilateral, multilateral, multi-level, multi-channel and multiform exchange and cooperation; it has strengthened its external publicity in Chinese and foreign women's exchange and expanded the cooperation field of international project constantly. As of 2003, ACWF had implemented more than 200 multilateral and bilateral cooperation projects.

Both the Chinese women and ACWF have expanded the international influence constantly since the new century.

By reviewing ACWF's non-government diplomacy, it can be concluded that ACWF's non-government diplomacy is closely related to the development of the People's Republic of China and plays a significant role in promoting the development of Chinese diplomacy.

3. Valuable Experience from ACWF's 70-year Diplomacy

3.1 To Follow the National Diplomacy as the Basic Principle of ACWF's Non-government Diplomacy

Throughout the history of ACWF's non-government diplomacy, ACWF's non-government diplomacy is an important non-government diplomacy type that always complies with national diplomacy, whatever its emphases in different periods: Antiwar and maintaining world peace in the early stage of the People's Republic of China, enhancing world peace after the reform and opening up or gradually including the diplomacy into national diplomatic mechanism after the new century.

In the exchanges between Chinese and foreign women, ACWF publicizes the progress and development of the Party, the State and Chinese women and cultivate an international environment conducive to China's peaceful development, lays a solid foundation of women's public opinion for the development of interstate relations. During the times when interstate relations were sensitive and complex, ACWF, by means of its nongovernmental exchange, facilitated national diplomacy by actively contacting, exchanging and having dialogues with women from all over the world and enhancing trust and clarifying doubts in a targeted manner. For example, in 1990s, ACWF, together with other women's organizations, held China-US, China-Japan and China-EU women's seminars and invited women's representatives of these countries to attend the seminars by all means. The regular women's seminars expanded all parties' exchange field, enhanced their mutual understanding and identification and exerted active effect on the lifting of sanctions of western countries against China.^[5] Under the great power diplomacy strategy with Chinese characteristics duly established to promote and build new-type international relations, ACWF's non-government diplomacy needs to expand the friendly exchange and cooperation with women and women's organizations of various countries further on the basis of national diplomatic strategies such as great power diplomacy, neighboring diplomacy and multilateral diplomacy.

3.2 To Promote the Friendly Cooperation of Chinese and Foreign Women as the Basic Task of ACWF's Non-government Diplomacy

ACWF is devoted to promoting the friendly exchange of Chinese and foreign women. From the perspective of expanding the exchange scope of Chinese and foreign women, ACWF has established friendly contact with nearly 700 organizations and agencies for women and children of 164 countries and regions

around the world (the number of countries was just 57 in the early stage of the People's Republic of China). It also keeps deepening the cooperative relationship having been established between Chinese and foreign women in the industry, e.g. deepening the cooperation and exchange by receiving women guests from various countries or dispatching Chinese women's representatives for friendly visit; organizing activities elaborately and holding or participating in women's development forums.

The most basic task of ACWF's non-government diplomacy lies in expanding and deepening the friendly exchange and cooperation between Chinese and foreign women.

3.3 To Maintain World Peace as the Important Mission of ACWF'S Non-government Diplomacy

Under the external and internal environments of safeguarding peace and turning against war in the early period of the People's Republic of China, ACWF called on all women over the country to constitute a broad united front together with women's anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and anti-hegemonism forces of various countries and determinedly fought against the hegemonic acts and war conspiracy of superpower. In consideration of the peace and development era themes during the reform and opening up, ACWF makes active efforts for maintaining world peace by supporting people's and women's just causes of various countries, actively participating in the peaceful and friendly activities of international women's circle (e.g. carrying out corresponding activities to coordinate UN's International Year of Children and Decade for Women and seizing the opportunity of the 20th anniversary of holding of UN's 4th World Conference on Women to organize influential international exchange activities). Under the new era of promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, ACWF will carry out the activities maintaining world peace and women's and children's rights and interests further.

3.4 To propel ACWF's Construction as the realistic Need of ACWF's Non-government Diplomacy

ACWF's non-government diplomacy undertakes an increasing number of responsibilities with the development of its diplomacy, and has not only the obvious nature of foreign affairs but also the very strong non-government nature of women's mass work, which puts forward new requirements for ACWF's construction. In light of all above, ACWF's non-government diplomacy should include the following aspects at least: Construction of ACWF's cadre team, development of ACWF's theoretical research and improvement of ACWF's working mode.

In terms of construction of its cadre team, ACWF should not only meet the general construction requirements of its cadre team but also master the basic diplomatic abilities, including: foreign language knowledge, publicity ability, international horizon and the diplomatic ability to respond to and deal with

complicated situation; ^[6] the ability to accurately master international problem and Chinese diplomatic policy and formulate mature diplomatic strategy ^[7].

Despite its huge achievements and rich diplomatic experience in diplomatic practice, ACWF has relatively weak diplomatic theoretical research in actuality. It has made remarkable results in theoretical research; for instance, ACWF took the lead in establishing special women research institute, formed a set of working methods and techniques in line with Chinese women's development and had team and technical advantages of professional work for women in 1980s. ^[8] After the reform and opening up, particularly after World Conference on Women in 1995, substantial development has been achieved to Chinese theoretical research on women/gender and ACWF's non-government diplomatic research. ^{[9][10]} However, ACWF's non-government diplomatic research needs improving further, whatever research team and achievement or research emphasis.

In non-government diplomacy, ACWF's work object is not the single domestic women and women's organizations any longer but the foreign women and international organizations. In the current international organization's projects that ACWF participates in or implements, the issue of empowerment to ACWF and women has been concerned by scholars. ^{[11][12]} This shows that ACWF needs not only to change the existing traditional working mode emphasizing mobilization, guidance, education, publicity and traditional platform erection but also to explore the corresponding new work mode in non-government diplomacy.

The construction of ACWF's cadre team, theoretical research of ACWF's non-government diplomacy and improvement of ACWF's working mode are the realistic issues to be solved urgently in ACWF's non-government diplomacy.

4. Discussion on ACWF's Non-government Diplomatic Functions under the New Era

"Great coordination of external work" is the new development direction of diplomacy under the new era put forward in the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee, which emphasizes the direction of non-government organization's participation in diplomacy. As an important non-government organization, ACWF needs to think the effect of diplomating and its benefits on own diplomatic functions in depth. First, ACWF's non-government diplomacy will be included in national diplomacy mechanism further and ACWF will, by following the construction of the Belt & Road, strengthen the exchange with women and women's organizations of great powers, neighboring countries and developing countries under the national diplomatic strategic pattern. Second, ACWF will promote exchange between Chinese and foreign women and world peace further with more pragmatic actions. Third, ACWF will strengthen publicity, enhance Chinese influence and discourse power in its non-government diplomacy and contribute the wisdom of Chinese women to diplomacy.

By reviewing the history of ACWF's non-government diplomacy, summarizing ACWF's non-government diplomatic experience and looking into ACWF's

non-government diplomacy, we can find that ACWF's non-government diplomacy plays a pretty significant "external contact" role in connecting the Party, the State and domestic women with foreign women and international women's organizations.

Having been strategically positioned as "the bond for associating the Party and government with women masses and the significant social pillar of state power", ACWF is basically functioned to "stand for and maintain women's rights and interests, and boost the equality between men and women and women's comprehensive development by highlighting the core work, serving the overall situation and contacting and serving women". However, the above positions were put forward oriented to "domestic women masses" and "ACWF's domestic work", and related to the times background and development history that Party and the State underwent in the early period of the People's Republic of China and the reform and opening up. Under the new era when development strategy is built in the community with a shared future for mankind, the significance of ACWF's non-government diplomacy gets more prominent and ACWF's non-government diplomatic function needs positioning at a higher level.

Under the new era, we need to think and discuss whether ACWF's "external contact" function could surpass its existing basic function.

Acknowledgement

* Fund Program: General project of the Ministry of Education – Research on Double Marginal Situation and Livelihood of "Non-native Farmers" in the Northwest Minority National Regions after Farmland Right Determination (17YJC850011); planning project of Inner Mongolia Social Sciences – "Research on Generation and Conciliation Mechanisms of New Contradiction between People and Land in Land and Grassland Right Determination in Rural and Pastoral Areas in Inner Mongolia" (2017NDB036).

The draft of this paper was read out in 2019 annual meeting of Chinese Women's Research Society and corrected by Professor Yang Guocai from Yunnan Minzu University and the Deputy Researcher Zhang Yongying of Women's Studies Institute of China, to whom, the author hereby makes acknowledgement.

Hongyan, Wang is a lecturer of the School of Ethnology and Sociology, Inner Mongolia University, Hohhot, China. Email: wanghongyannd207@imu.edu.cn.

References

- [1] In the early stage since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the non-government diplomacy activities were mainly implemented by the four people's organizations such as the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, All-China Youth Federation, All-China Women's Federation and Chinese People's Committee for World Peace.
- [2] From the 3rd National Women's Congress of China in 1957 to 1987, ACWF's

normal diplomacy is under suspension (see Geng Huamin: On Women's Diplomacy during the Cultural Revolution, Journal of China Women's University, 2010 Issue 2): No National Women's Congress of China or congress report. The author, while implementing analysis in this paper, does not include ACWF's non-government diplomacy during the Cultural Revolution in the scope according to report text of the congress.

- [3] Report of ACWF on International Work over the Two Years (1952) Source: Important Literature of ACWF on Women Author: All-China Women's Federation Time: 19520000 Source: Archives of ACWF.
- [4] Chief Director Chen Muhua, Forty Years of All-China Women's Federation, China Women Publishing House, 1991, p423.
- [5] Shi Xin. A Discussion on Influence of Non-government Diplomacy on Development of Women's Organization [J]. Journal of Chinese Women's Studies, 2012, (04).
- [6] Zhao Shaohua. Opportunities and Challenges in Chinese Women's Non-government Diplomacy and Development Prospect [J]. Theory Front, 2006, (06).
- [7] Liu Sisi. On Chinese Women's Non-government Diplomacy [J]. Public Diplomacy Quarterly, 2010 Winter Issue.
- [8] Ding Juan and Ma Yan. Research on the Advantages and Obstacles of Women's Federation in Assuming Government Function [J]. Journal of Chinese Women's Studies, 2006, (S2).
- [9] Women's Studies Institute of China. The Development of Chinese Theoretical Research on Women/Gender over Ten Years – Active Influence of UN's 4th World Conference on Women [J]. Journal of Chinese Women's Studies, 2005, (04).
- [10] Zhang Di. A Review upon Chinese Women's Non-government Diplomacy over the 30 Years of the Reform and Opening up [J]. Contemporary World, 2009, (02).
- [11] Ye Jingzhong, Women's Federation's Unempowered Participation in International Development Projects [J]. Journal of Chinese Women's Studies, 2004, (06).
- [12] Women participated in the agricultural development in virtue of international agricultural development program after the confirmation of land right. The biggest problem includes the poor participation and ACWF's supporting organizations. Relevant researches are in progress.