

## World Conference on Women and Sport in Kumamoto, Japan

WomenSport International played a key role in the 4th World Conference on Women and Sport which took place in Kumamoto, Japan from 11-14 May 2006 under the auspices of the International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG). WSI President **Kari Fasting** was part of the Conference Planning Sub group and led a workshop on sexual harassment while WSI Executive Board member **Johanna Vescio** was installed as the new IWG Co-Chair for 2006-2010.

The conference theme was **“Participating in Change”**. Over 700 participants from nearly 100 countries including representatives from National Olympic Committees, International Sporting Federations, United Nations, non-government organisations as well as senior government officials, academics and athletes attended the conference. The legacy of the conference was The Kumamoto Commitment to Collaboration. In contrast to previous IWG conferences this was not a written statement such as, for example, the Brighton Declaration, but a visual display of Asian characters. When Etsuko Ogasawara, IWG Co-Chair, unveiled the artwork during the closing ceremony the audience was mesmerised. View the Kumamoto Commitment to Collaboration on [www.iwg-gti.org/pdfs/kumamotocommitment.pdf](http://www.iwg-gti.org/pdfs/kumamotocommitment.pdf) (pdf, 198 KB)

A unique feature of the conference was the involvement of the city of Kumamoto. Welcome signs throughout the city and a special “Welcome Street” greeted the conference participants. Kumamoto citizens, core of the 700 volunteers involved in the conference, invited participants into their homes, schools and musea. They also organised a wonderful reception at Kumamoto Castle with local Japanese cuisine, drummers and folk dance. Seishi Kohyama, Mayor of Kumamoto, took an active part in the conference itself by not only speaking at the opening ceremony but also attending all keynote sessions and some workshops.



Seishi Kohyama, Mayor of Kumamoto, with IWG members

The significance of the conference was highlighted by the presence of **Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado** at the Opening Ceremony and the two keynote presentations. She mentioned that sport enriches our lives in many ways, however, there is still much left to be done to improve the environment surrounding women and sport.



H.I.H. Princess Takamado with Kari Fasting

**Carolyn Hannan**, Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women at the United Nations, delivered the opening keynote “Challenging the Gender Order”. In the second keynote **Lydia La Riviera – Zijdel**, International Consultant in Gender and Diversity, the Netherlands, presented her view on the theme “Participating in Change”.



Audience during a plenary session

The plenary sessions were followed by twelve workshops on a range of cutting edge topics such as:

- Marketing women and sport in the new media
- Growing up global: Empowering girls through the world of sport
- Sport as a tool for peace and development
- Addressing HIV/AIDS through sport
- Changing the culture of leadership in sport
- Creating a sport culture free of sexual harassment and abuse

- Ethical issues for women and sport

View recommendations from these workshops on [www.iwg-gti.org/e/archives/034-Workshops.htm](http://www.iwg-gti.org/e/archives/034-Workshops.htm)

WSI was visible during the conference in many ways. **Kari Fasting**, WSI President, led the workshop “Creating a sport culture free of sexual harassment and abuse” while **Chris Shelton**, WSI Board member, chaired the workshop “Changing the culture of leadership in sport”. WSI member **Celia Brackenridge** was on the plenary panel which discussed how to bring about cultural change. **Anita White**, another WSI member, played a prominent role as the conference program coordinator and introducing all plenary sessions.



Anita White

Further, WSI presented a poster during the Knowledge Exchange – Poster Fair which attracted much attention and provided a good opportunity to inform conference participants about our work.



Takako Iida (R) and colleague with the WSI poster

**Ani Chroni**, WSI Board member, also presented a poster about her research with **Kari Fasting** and **Nada Knorre** on experiences of Greek, Norwegian and Czech female sport students.

During the Closing Ceremony a wonderful performance by a didgeridoo player (the didgeridoo is a traditional Australian Aboriginal instrument) set the scene for the transition from Japan to Australia. This was followed by **Etsuko Ogasawara** handing over the IWG flag to **Johanna Vescio**, WSI Board member and the new IWG Co-Chair 2006-2010. Johanna warmly invited all participants to gather again for the next World Conference on Women and Sport in Sydney in 2010.



Johanna Vescio (R) receiving the IWG flag from Etsuko Ogasawara during the Closing Ceremony



L-R Anita White, Johanna Vescio, Sock Teo-Koh and Chris Shelton at Mount Asa hot springs.