The year’s latter half began with the SWSD global conference in Korea, June 27-30
For the Asia Pacific Region, the second half of 2016 started from the global conference in Korea. More than 2,000 people gathered at the global conference (SWSD) in Seoul from all around the world. According to estimates, the scale of participation from the Asia Pacific Region was around 1,000. The IFSW General Assembly (June 23-26) was held prior to, while the Asia Pacific Regional Meeting was held during the conference. At the Regional Meeting (June 29), we could welcome participants from 15 countries.

Workshop for the prevention of child labor and human trafficking held in India, August 16-19
Utilizing grants from the Japanese Center for Social Welfare Promotion and National Examination, a workshop was organized for the prevention of child labor and human trafficking at Christ University, Bengaluru, India. Participants included 60 social work professionals, educators, public administrators, legal experts, UN consultants, NPO managers, and students. From IFSW-AP, President Mariko Kimura and Treasurer Michiko Hirata attended. Since 2015, we have hosted these workshops with themes related to children and disaster prevention. Our aim is to strengthen professional social work organizations in the Asia Pacific Region, to raise skills, to communicate the significance of joining international professional organizations, to engage in awareness raising by providing opportunities for professionals to raise their voice, and to strengthen mechanism for public and private assistance. With plenty of time for discussion in the program, the workshop structure had enough scope for interactions. This way, many people could make recommendations from their points of view and/or exchange opinions with each other.

BCM College’s Department of Social Work held the Samanwaya event in Kottovam, November 7-8
The title of the two day conference and congress means ‘blend of all’ and it was organized in association with the India Network of Professional Social Work Associations (INPSW), the Kerala Association of Professional Social Workers (KAPS), and IFSW-AP. It attracted 572 social work students from 40 colleges and 145 social work practitioners including educators. IFSW-AP President Mariko Kimura opened the
event which was presided over by the archbishop of the Archdiocese of Kottoyam and participants included INPSWA President Gandhi Doss, INPSWA Secretary General Sriganesh M. V., KAPS President Prasanth Palakkappillil, and KAPS Secretary General Ipe Varghese. In the state of Kerala, organizational membership rate is below 10%, so one of the objectives of such conferences is to increase this. This was the 14th Samanwaya for students and more than 300 of them gathered from around the state. To serve as examples of the struggle against drugs, the program included a poster session, a street play, and a musical on social work measures concerned with drug addiction, especially among children. In these, both children and youth appeared as users who rely on social work services, thereby making it a very effective performance. On the following day, the convocation ceremony took place at BCM College. For details, please see the related report.

**Hong Kong Social Workers Association visited Japan and interacted with Japanese organizations, November 15-19**

The Hong Kong Social Workers Association (HKSWA) organized a visit to Japan. Regarding HKSWA’s Japanese visit, a request was made by Hong Kong in 2015 at the Bangkok regional conference and the Japanese counterpart organizations proceeded with the necessary preparations. The program included lectures at the Japan College of Social Work on the welfare system, current social conditions, as well as service trends, visits to and discussion at facilities in the fields of elderly welfare, healthcare and rehabilitation, child welfare, and substance addiction. The Japanese Association of Certified Social Workers was also one of the agencies visited. On the day before departure, an exchange party was organized with introductions on psychiatric and medical social work in Japan. Participants from Hong Kong posed many questions and engaged in active discussion demonstrating the high standard of professionalism of HKSWA members.

**IFSW President visited China, December 5-8**

IFSW President Ruth Stark paid a visit to China. This presidential visit to China was made possible by an invitation to an international symposium hosted by the Japan College of Social Work. One aim of the visit was to ask for support for the regional conference in Shenzhen scheduled to be held in 2017. Large scale economic development in China has led to an increase in social problems and social work needs, meaning that the task to establish a welfare system and to train a workforce who can work within it is an urgent one. It has been a while since China joined IFSW, but the
educational organization joined APASWE only in 2015 at the Bangkok conference with only one member, namely the Social Work College of the Open University of China. However, the Chinese association of schools for social work education is integrated into the China Association of Social Workers (CASW).

With regard to the 2017 regional conference, given the situation in China that the educational organization does not have enough organizational capacity yet, IFSW and IFSW-AP has needed to utilise their experience in organizing international and regional conferences and assist CASW with advise related to the setting of the theme and sub-themes, selection of speakers, screening of abstracts, management of scholarships, program content, and planning. On the other hand, in spite of such difficulties and limited experience, supporting the organization of such a conference is a perfect opportunity for the host country for professional networking and for gaining a considerable amount of professional knowledge and information, so China will be able to hugely benefit. Expectations are high towards the future development of Chinese professional social work training and organizations.

As an additional stage of preparation for organizing the regional conference, the IFSW-AP President is scheduled to visit the conference’s organizing area and the local hosts in late April with Irene, President of Hong Kong Association of Social Workers.

**IFSW President’s visit to Japan, December 4-11**

Ruth Stark, IFSW Global President, visited Japan for the first time. This visit was realized because of the international social work symposium put up by the Japan College of Social Work (JCSW). JCSW held its annual international symposium on social work in Asia and the Pacific Rim in Tokyo and invited IFSW President Ruth Stark as a keynote speaker. This was the president’s first visit to Japan. IFSW-AP President Mariko Kimura also served as IFSW Vice President and invited President Stark and her husband to a traditional Japanese garden where they held a walking meeting. It was late fall in Japan with maple leaves in the garden having changed their colors; an ideal season for taking a walk. The weather was just beautiful too; not too cold, not too hot. The meeting touched on such topics as further details of the already set theme for the regional conference in China, the selection of guest speakers, the global agenda for social work decided on by the three international organizations of the profession including IFSW, organizational issues to be tackled in collaboration by professionals, and concrete methods of integrating education and research.

During her stay in Japan, the President visited the Center for Social Welfare Promotion and National Examination, the sponsoring organization of several IFSW-AP projects.
In her keynote speech, President Stark talked about how to link global social work issues with issues in Asia and Japan. She commented on such methods from her own perspective and personal experience as a social worker, especially as a rights advocate in child and juvenile services.

**IFSW-AP President and Treasurer visited the Vietnamese Association of Social Workers, December 24-28**

Near the end of 2016, President Mariko Kimura and Treasurer Michiko Hirata visited the professional association for social workers in Vietnam and met with Vice President Tuan, as well as the Secretary General. The purpose of the visit was to decide on details of a plan to organize a workshop on child labor and human trafficking in 2017 with financial support from the Japanese Center for Social Welfare Promotion and National Examination. The visit was organized after collecting information from INPSWA President Gandhi Doss in India and IFSW’s global Secretary General. A meeting could be set up with Department Head To from the Ministry of Labor’s Social Assistance Bureau, so we managed to secure government support such as venue etc. for the association hosted workshop.

The professional association itself was established in the late 1990s. With national institutions in the leadership position, universities and colleges are engaged in professional training including graduate courses. In the social work practice field, we observed the actual situation at agencies operated by the private sector and NGOs, such as individual and group services at a facility for children with disabilities, counselling and other clinical practice activities.

**New committee member portfolio holders in Asia Pacific regional committee**

Ai Hua has picked up the Ethics portfolio in place of Elsie Lee who had been holding both Ethics as well as our regional Publications work. Raed Amira has been appointed in place of Shui Lai to hold the Human Rights portfolio in the AP region. We would like to thank Elsie Lee and Shui Lai for their devotion and contributions on these portfolios as committee members at IFSW-AP.

**New initiative to be set up for exchange between social workers in the Asia Pacific Region**
This has been proposed by INPSWA Secretary General Sriganesh M. V. to fulfill the need to receive the newest and most up-to-date information and for social workers in the Asia Pacific Region to inspire each other. He will provide further thoughts on how to organize this committee’s activities soon.

**Japanese Coordinating Body to change its name and hold a celebration on World Social Work Day 2017**

The Japanese Coordinating Body for IFSW Membership will change its name to the Japanese Federation of Social Workers (JFSW) and will officially announce its new name on the World Social Work Day 2017.

The latter half of the 2016 has been filled with exciting events in the social work field. We would like to thank all the executive members and committee members of IFSW-AP, as well as our member countries for their support.

**Capacity Building: Social Workers for Disaster Response held in Malaysia March 2017**

The Malaysian Association of Social Workers (MASW) collaborated with the International Federation of Social Workers – Asia Pacific (IFSW-AP) to conduct the third in a series of regional workshops on enhancing social workers’ response to disasters. The theme was ‘Capacity Building Social Workers for Disaster Response in Malaysia’ and it was held at the training centre of the National Council for Welfare and Social Development, Kuala Lumpur on the 6th & 7th March 2017.

The workshop was largely funded by the Japanese Centre for Social Welfare Promotion and National Examination via the Japanese Coordinating Body for IFSW Membership (JCBIFSWM) with Professor Nobuyuki Kataoka and Viktor Virag representing the Japanese Co-ordinating body and the President of IFSW-AP, Prof Dr Mariko Kimura respectively.

The main purposes of the workshop were to equip social work practitioners with appropriate understanding of issues related to disaster management (including
Psychosocial Assessments and Psychological First Aid (PFA) and to assist social work practitioners in self-preparation and building resilience to cope with psychological experiences of responding to disasters.

A total of 79 participants including 12 international attendees from Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Singapore, Palestine and Japan benefitted from a number of international experts speaking at this event.

Valuable feedback was received from participants and for MASW, there is the potential for developing ongoing training at different levels to continue enhancing the knowledge and skills of social workers and other disaster management personnel and volunteers.

**IFSW-AP President’s visit to Shenzhen, China: April 2017**

The Asia Pacific Joint Regional Social Work Conference will be held in Shenzhen at the Coli Hotel between September 26th and 29th, 2017. The conference theme is scheduled to be ‘Challenges and Responsibilities: Innovative Social Work and Sustainable Development’. The China Association of Social Workers and The Open University of China are engaged in preparations in collaboration with the local social work association and department of social services. From April 18th to 22nd, IFSW-AP President Mariko Kimura, accompanied by Hong Kong Social Workers Association President Irene Leung, visited Shenzhen to meet with the local organizing committee and to have a look at local facilities and the progress of preparation.

On April 20th, the president received a report from China Association of Social Workers President Gang regarding the state of preparations for the conference. Preparations are proceeding well: more than one hundred volunteers are standing by in Shenzhen with English and other language skills, field visits are being organized, the scientific committee is already reviewing presentation abstracts, and cultural events are being prepared. Regarding the selection of keynote and plenary speakers who will provide the backbone of the conference, IFSW and IFSW-AP are giving extensive advice and a list of speakers from a wide range of fields is taking final shape. Furthermore, the Chinese organizing committee will be providing a number of scholarships.

Shenzhen is designated as a special economic zone and has good location accessible in about one hour by train or bus from Hong Kong. Also, utilizing the IFSW Development Fund, a pre-conference symposium on ‘Intercountry Assessment of
Children and Family Members’ will be held on September 26th. We would like to have as many participants for as possible. Program details are available at http://www.apsw2017.com.

**First World Social Work Day UN Celebration in the Asia Pacific at the Bangkok Office on April 26, 2017**

2017 saw the 34th World Social Work Day celebration at the UN. Events celebrating World Social Work Day are held on the third Tuesday of March at the UN Headquarters in New York, and the UN Offices in Geneva and Vienna. On April, 26th, the first World Social Work Day UN celebration was held in the Asia Pacific region at the United Nations Bangkok Office. The opening ceremony was held in a grand fashion with the Minister of Social Development and Human Security attending. With 200 participants, including local social workers, academics, UN personnel, the general public, and educators, a symposium was organized about this year’s theme of the IFSW/IASSW/ICSW Global Agenda, namely ‘Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability’.

IFSW-AP President Mariko Kimura was invited as a keynote speaker. In her speech, the president touched on issues such as the geographic conditions in the Asia Pacific region, the frequency of disasters, the significance of social work in long-term post disaster interventions, problems related to poverty and demographics in Asia, social work interventions aimed at maintaining families and communities, empowerment of people, multi-sector and multi-professional collaboration between social workers and other actors such as governments and multinational corporations etc. However, most of all, the president made a strong case to increase our visibility by communicating the role of social workers throughout the world as using interventions that focus on the empowerment of people. After the keynote speech, a symposium on social work education was held with the participation of such experts as APASWE President Fentiny Nugroho, Thammasat University Professor Decha Sungkawan, and Special Advisor on Social Services Chinchai from the Thai government.

This event and the following day provided an opportunity for networking between participants through further exchange of ideas including social workers from the private sector. The organizers of this event in Bangkok are enthusiastic about holding a similar celebration again next year.

Mariko Kimura, Ph.D.
President, IFSW-AP

Rose Henderson
Vice President, IFSW-AP