



Central and Eastern European Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

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BURNING ISSUE

58th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

On March 10-21 the 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place in New York. Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and non-governmental organizations from all regions of the world attended the session to discuss its priority theme of *Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls* and the review theme of *Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work*.

After two weeks of intense negotiations the session ended on early Saturday morning with a strong call to prioritize gender equality and the human rights of women in order to achieve sustainable development. The Commission specifically called for a stand-alone goal on gender

equality, a move that was applauded by women's rights activists. It signals that gender equality and women's rights are important in and of themselves, as well as a priority for governmental investment. The Commission also stated that the post-2015 development agenda must include gender-specific targets across other development goals, strategies, and objectives—especially those related to education, health, economic justice, and the environment. It also called on governments to address the discriminatory social norms and practices that foster gender inequality. The Agreed Conclusions reaffirmed the Cairo Programme of Action as well as the Beijing Platform of Action, which called for investments in "quality comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care" including emergency contraception, information and education, safe abortion where allowed by law, and prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections and HIV. Furthermore, the Conclusions called for the recognition of the human rights of women to "decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality... free from coercion, discrimination, and violence." Women's health and rights organizations applauded governments who stood up for the rights of all individuals to live free of violence, discrimination, and barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health services, particularly for girls. However, advocates expressed disappointment that a small minority of conservative governments spurred on by the Holy See—which holds special observer status at the UN—held up negotiations by objecting to concepts as fundamental as gender and the human rights of women throughout the two weeks of negotiations. In particular, advocates noted that, despite a 20-year legacy of UN prohibition of discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and increasingly on gender identity, government delegates gave in to pressure to exclude recognition of these violations in the final agreed conclusions.

ASTRA member from Armenia, representative of Society Without Violence, delivered the ASTRA oral statement at the 58th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. You can read the full text [HERE](#). Federation for Women and Family Planning, serving as ASTRA Secretariat, submitted a written statement, available [HERE](#).

The draft agreed conclusions are available [online](#).

[CSW58 Press Release](#)

[Statement by UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka on the outcome of the 58th session of the CSW](#)

REGIONAL UPDATES

New UNFPA Regional Director

Heimo Laakkonen has been appointed as the new Director of UNFPA's Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia and arrived in Istanbul in March to assume his new position. "I am very excited to lead UNFPA's work in Eastern Europe and Central Asia," said Mr. Laakkonen. "We have made real progress in improving the lives of women and young people in this region, but not everyone has benefitted equally. Much remains to be done to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health, promote gender equality and nurture young people's potential."

Source: [UNFPA EECA](#)

Violence against women is an extensive human rights abuse across the European Union

The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights published an extensive [report](#) which reveals extensive levels of abuse faced by women across 28 member states in the European Union. The report is based on interviews with 42 000 women aged 18 - 74 across the EU, who were asked about their experiences of physical, sexual and psychological violence, including incidents of intimate partner violence. The survey found a third of women in Europe (62 million) had suffered a physical or sexual assault. 1 in 10 women also said they had experienced some kind of sexual violence from an adult by the time they reached 15. Another 1 in 10 had experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. Morten Kjaerum, director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, said: "Violence against women, and specifically gender-based violence that disproportionately affects women, is an extensive human rights abuse that the EU cannot afford to overlook."

Source: [EU Agency for Fundamental Rights](#), [The Guardian](#)

MEPs reject report on gender equality

On March 11th the European Parliament has rejected the report prepared by the Portuguese MEP Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE) on the *"Equality between women and men in the European Union."* The report was rejected by 298 votes (289 in favour, 87 abstained). It recommended a wide range of measures to tackle inequality between men and women in the EU. It focused (and that was most likely the content which accelerated most opposition) on sexual health, recommending Member States to "safeguard women's right to free, high-quality public gynaecological and obstetric healthcare services and to sexual and reproductive health in general, including the right to voluntary termination of pregnancy." The text also contained a series of observations on gender equality and on the protection of women's rights on social, family and job sectors; it underlined the importance of being committed to reach targets such as wage equality between men and women, social security, stopping violence and gender-targeted stereotypes. After the rejection Zuber said that parliament had sent a "shameful signal – it's a disgrace".

Access the Zuber report on gender equality in the EU for year 2012 [HERE](#).

Source: [European Parliament](#), [EU News](#)

GUE/NGL hearing on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the European Parliament

On 6 March representative of the Federation for Women and Family Planning (Poland) and ASTRA Network spoke at hearing at the European Parliament: *Defending sexual and reproductive health and rights - Ensuring access for all women*. The discussion, opened by Gabriele Zimmer, the group's president and Mikael Gustafsson, Chair of the Committee on women's rights and gender equality began with discussions about European and global challenges to SRHR with speeches from Irene Donadio of IPPF and Ana Rosa Alcalde from Alianza por la Solidaridad. The second part included discussion and country profiles on the situation in Poland, Spain, Ireland, Portugal and Germany in regards to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights with focus on access to safe and legal abortion.

National movements from these countries, represented in the panel, stressed that a coordinated feminist solidarity movement is needed in order to tackle this regression. The hearing concluded with an overall call from Ms. Eva Palomo from Spain for harmonising EU internal and external actions as key factor for a successful solidarity movement.

Source: [Federation for Women and Family Planning](#)

Meeting on violence against women in the European Parliament

Interparliamentary Committee Meeting „*Preventing violence against women - a challenge for all*“ took place on Wednesday, 5th March 2014 in the European Parliament. It was chaired by Mikael Gustaffson, the Chair of the FEMM Committee and attended by MEP Antonia Parvanova. For programme and details click [here](#).

Source: [European Parliament](#)

Russia: Improving reproductive health discussed by The State Duma

The State Duma Committee on Health held a Round Table in February 2014 on improving reproductive health. Members of Parliament, representatives of the Ministry of Health, the legislative and executive authorities, policy makers, leading scientists and experts and representatives of public organizations participated in the discussion. In her speech, Health Committee member and EPF Executive Committee member, Hon. Saliya Murzabaeva noted that Russia's demographic policy towards 2025 places reproductive health care as a priority area. Summing up the Roundtable, the participants noted the need to create a unified state policy in the field of reproductive health, strengthening preventive measures aimed primarily at young people, to ensure the availability and quality of free medical care to women during pregnancy and childbirth and to their newborns.

Source: [EPF](#)

15th Warsaw Feminist March MANIFA

On 9 March 2014 the team of the Federation for Women and Family Planning and Ponton Group of Sex Educators, Polish ASTRA and ASTRA Youth members, participated in the 15th Warsaw Feminist March MANIFA. Activists from both organizations have been active in the preparations of this event. This years theme was "Equality at home, in school and at work" and the demands focused on access to gender equality education for young people and equality in work and home settings. Poland still awaits the ratification of the Istanbul convention on combating gender-based violence and these demands were voiced as well.

Source: [Federation for Women and Family Planning](#)

GLOBAL UPDATES

High-Level Task Force for ICPD calls on focus on women's human rights and SRHR in the Post 2015 agenda

At the High Level Task Force side event at the 58th session of the CSW: Fulfilling the Promise of Gender Equality: Women, Girls and the Post-2015 Agenda held on March 11 in New York the HLTF called on focus on women's human rights and SRHR in the Post 2015 agenda. The panellists, among them Dr. Nafis Sadik, Secretary-General of the ICPD, Ms. Amina Doherty, Youth Leader and Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mary of Denmark discussed the future Post 2015 and why putting women and girls at the center of it will benefit the society. Dr. Sadik pointer out the fact that the ICPD's key commitment to sexual and reproductive health for all, made 20 years ago in Cairo, had essentially "fallen off the table," resulting in unnecessary hardship and suffering, especially for women and adolescent girls. "If we really want to eradicate preventable deaths of women and girls, we need to tackle unsafe abortion," Dr. Sadik added, noting that while substantial progress has been made in reducing maternal mortality, the proportion of deaths due to unsafe abortion "has not moved." "Governments need to pay attention. They haven't looked at all the causes," said Dr. Sadik.

Source: [High Level Task Force for ICPD](#)

Post 2015 Feminist Declaration

In February 2014 ASTRA participated in a meeting organized by RESURJ, the International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC), the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), the International Planned Parenthood Federation – Western Hemisphere Region (IPPF/WHR), and Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF). The event brought together 60 feminists from 31 countries and 47 nongovernmental organisations, including young people's women's, indigenous, development and human rights organizations from across the world. The meeting resulted in a landmark declaration, endorsed by over 350 organizations in 143 countries calling for the fulfilment of gender equality and women's human rights through the Post 2015 development agenda, and for the agenda and governments to prioritize gender, economic, social and ecological justice. The declaration is a vision of the world that millions of us seek, which propose alternative models of development that uphold peace, security, equality and human rights for all and for the wellbeing of nature and of the planet in the coming decades.

Read the feminist Post 2015 declaration in [ENGLISH](#) or [RUSSIAN](#).

Source: [ASTRA Network](#), [RESURJ](#)

CEDAW statement on sexual and reproductive health and rights

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, at its recently concluded [session](#), issued a statement on sexual and reproductive health and rights, which is its contribution to the ICPD+20 review process. The Committee reminds us that it "has observed that failure of a State party to provide services and the criminalisation of some services that only women require is

a violation of women's reproductive rights and constitutes discrimination against them.” It States that “the provision of, inter alia, safe abortion and post abortion care; maternity care; timely diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV), breast and reproductive cancers, and infertility; as well as access to accurate and comprehensive information about sexuality and reproduction, are all part of the right to sexual and reproductive health” and that “every State can and should do more to ensure the full respect, protection and fulfilment of sexual and reproductive rights, in line with human rights obligations.”

Access the CEDAW statement [here](#).

The Airlie Declaration for Safe Legal Abortion

On Wednesday, March 26, political, health and human rights leaders from more than 30 countries issued a declaration, “The Airlie Declaration for Safe Legal Abortion,” calling for the repeal of all criminal abortion laws and universal access to safe legal abortion. The Declaration was the culmination of a two-day meeting, World Leaders Consultation on Safe Legal Abortion, at Airlie Center, Virginia, March 24-25, set against the backdrop of the 20-year review by the United Nations of the Program of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and global debates about the post-2015 development agenda. The Airlie Declaration focuses on the slow progress on improving access to safe abortion since the Cairo conference, drawing attention to estimates that more than 1 million women have died and more than 100 million have suffered injuries – many of them lifelong – due to complications from unsafe abortion. The Declaration calls on governments to “make safe legal abortion universally available and accessible to all women regardless of age, income, or where they live.”

[The Airlie Declaration](#) is available online at www.safeabortionpost2015.org

Source: [IPAS](#)

YOUTH

Zero-Draft for the World Conference on Youth 2014

The [World Conference on Youth](#) that takes place from 6 to 10 May, 2014 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, is approaching. Therefore the Zero-Draft for the outcomes of the event has been published. The first section is the preamble, the second section is the agreed outcomes and the final section is the post-script. The Appendix is designed to show diversity of views in the discussions and a bases for the discussions and round tables at the conference itself. This document will be a starting point for the later changes developed in discussions.

The Zero-Draft can be accessed [on the WCY2014 website](#).

Civil society survey on youth priorities

Looking towards the post-2015 agenda, **ARROW and Youth Coalition are teaming up to conduct a survey** on youth priorities in the Global South. It will be later used to identify a comprehensive monitoring framework for young people that supports holding governments accountable for their commitments. Input from all regions is needed in order to present a representative, united voice.

To complete an online survey follow the link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/youthpost2015>

UPCOMING EVENTS

47th Session of the UN Commission on Population and Development

From the 7-11 April the **47th session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD)** with its main theme of *Assessment of the status of implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development* will be taking place in New York. This session is one of the last steps in the ICPD+20 review process before the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on ICPD beyond 2014 in September this year. Just recently the information about a negotiated outcome of the CPD had been released. This year's CPD Bureau is formed by Uruguay (Chair) and Georgia, Senegal, Denmark and Japan (Vice-Chairpersons).

Source: [UN Population Division](#)

CPD Side Event: Uniting for Safe Legal Abortion: A Call to Action for 2014 and Beyond

This side event will highlight progress and challenges in addressing unsafe abortion since it was put on the global agenda in the 1994 ICPD Program of Action. Speakers will provide regional and country perspectives and will also discuss the progress of global dialogue on the issue of unsafe abortion and the impact of international alliances that oppose and threaten women's reproductive rights. Special attention will be given to the deliberations and outcome of the world leaders' consultation, "Uniting for Safe Legal Abortion," held in Airlie Center, Virginia, March 24-25, 2014. The event will take place on April 10th, 1:15-2:45 p.m. in Manhattan Room, East Tower, 2nd Floor. RSVP to Sarah Cannady, cannadys@ipas.org, with your name and organization.

Source: [IPAS](#)

CPD Side Event of the High Level Task Force for ICPD: "Celebrating Cairo & Going Beyond"

The High Level Task Force for ICPD invites to side event at which leading global figures in the field of human rights will discuss what bold actions can be taken to ensure that gender equality and the sexual and reproductive rights of women and young people are truly advanced through ongoing intergovernmental processes. Among speakers are Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Navi Pillay and Wanda

Nowicka. The event will take place on April 8th from 1.15 to 2.45 in Conference Room 1, United Nations Secretariat, New York.

Source: [HLTF](#)

Sexuality education: the way forward for equality and empowerment. Definitions, approaches and issues around sexuality education in Europe conference will be held on Friday May 16th in Strasbourg, France and hosted by Le Planning Familial. The right to sexuality education, strategies to defend sexual rights and sharing experiences are among the topics to be discussed at this event. Registration will begin in April.

Source: www.planning-familial.org

The long-term future of the European Court of Human Rights Conference will be held in Oslo on 7 and 8 April 2014 and is organized by the MultiRights project and the PluriCourts centre of excellence at Oslo University under the auspices of the Council of Europe. It will bring academics, government representatives and international organizations together. For more information click [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

WHO: Ensuring human rights in the provision of contraceptive information and services

In order to accelerate progress towards attainment of international development goals and targets in sexual and reproductive health, and in particular to contribute to meeting unmet need for contraceptive information and services, WHO has published [guidance](#) for policy-makers, programme managers providers and other stakeholders in the health sector on how to ensure that human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled, while services are scaled up to reduce unmet need for contraception.

Source: [World Health Organization](#)

New emergency contraception guidelines template

European Consortium for Emergency Contraception introduces a new [guidelines template](#), which intends to aid in the development or updating of emergency contraception guidelines in European countries according to the best available evidence. Developed with the support of the European Society of Contraception, this tool addresses the key issues that should be included in all clinical emergency contraception guidelines.

Source: [European Consortium for Emergency Contraception](#)

Our Right To Safety: Women Human Rights Defenders' Holistic Approach To Protection

AWID, in collaboration with the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition, has developed this [publication](#) in an effort to assess the various mechanisms that have been developed to provide protection to WHRDs at risk, including initiatives developed by national governments, and regional and international human rights bodies.

Source: [AWID](#)

CALL TO ACTION

Lithuanian initiative for the right to safe and legal abortion

The Lithuanian Parliament is currently deliberating the “Law on the protection of a life in a pre-natal phase” and accompanying legislative projects, otherwise known as the “abortion ban bill”. The Committee on Health Affairs has already approved the bill and those who initiated the law expect it will be passed by the Parliament in Spring. The bill is a dangerous violation of basic women’s rights, blatantly limiting the right to terminate pregnancy in two cases only: if a pregnancy poses an evident threat to life of a mother or if a pregnancy is the result of rape. Even in the latter instance, the victim of a rape has only 12 weeks to prove the rape case and terminate the pregnancy. Also, if approved, the bill would equate women who terminate pregnancies with the murderers of unborn children, and abortion would be considered a criminal act punishable by up to three years in prison.

The number of abortions in Lithuania is constantly declining. To continue to decrease the need for abortion, consistent preventative measures such as sex education, affordable and available contraception, and an encouraging social and financial environment must be introduced. However, the guaranteed right to abortion in case of an unwanted pregnancy must remain intact. Women must have access to safe and legal abortions, so that women seeking to terminate pregnancy will not be persecuted and will not risk their lives in search of illegal alternatives.

Everyone is invited to sign this [on-line petition](#) and to join the Lithuanian Citizens’ Initiative for the Right to a Safe and Legal Abortion, and tell the Lithuanian Parliament that women’ bodies belong to women. Supporters can also contribute by taking a pro-choice photograph and submitting it to the official page of the initiative.

[The initiative’s official blog in Lithuanian](#) and [Facebook page](#)

Source: [European Women’s Lobby](#)

CALL TO ACTION: The Actions We Need for the Future We Want - A Civil Society Red Flag

The civil society red flag statement was developed at the 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in connection to the resistance to put human rights at the center of development at the Open Working Group and at the UN session from several states. Sign the call to action [HERE](#).

ASTRA Network members

Albania - Albanian Family Planning Association
Armenia - Women's Rights Center
Armenia - Society Without Violence
Armenia - Women's Resource Center
Azerbaijan - Center "Women and Modern World"
Belarus - Women's Independent Democratic Movement of Belarus
Bulgaria - Bulgarian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association
Bulgaria - Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation
Bulgaria - Gender Education, Research and Technologies
Bulgaria - Demetra Association
Bulgaria - Gender Alternatives Foundation
Bosnia and Herzegovina – Sarajevo Open Center
Croatia - B.a.b.e. (Be Active, Be Emancipated)
Croatia - CESI - Center for Education and Counseling of Woman
Croatia - Women's Room
Georgia – Real People, Real Visio
Georgia – HERA XXI
Georgia - Women's Center
Hungary – PATENT
Kazakhstan - The Legal Center for Women's Initiatives "Sana Sezim"
Lithuania - Family Planning and Sexual Health Association
Latvia - Latvia's Association for Family Planning And Sexual Health
Macedonia - Association for emancipation, solidarity and equality of women
Macedonia – Shelter Center
Macedonia - Association for emancipation, solidarity and equality of women
Macedonia - Health Education and Research Association
Moldova – Family Planning Association
Moldova - Reproductive Health Service Center
Poland - Federation for Women and Family Planning
Romania - Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives
Romania - A.L.E.G.
Romania - The East European Institute of Reproductive Health
Romania - AnA: Society for Feminist Analysis
Russia - Novogorod Gender Center
Russia – Russian Association for Population and Development
Slovakia – Pro Choice
Tajikistan – Gender and Development
Ukraine - Women Health and Family Planning
Ukraine - Charitable SALUS Foundation
Uzbekistan - Future Generation

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Supported by the [Sigrid Rausing Trust](#)

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