



On the occasion of the 59th session of UN Commission on the Status of Women ASTRA addresses the UN Permanent Missions of the Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Caucasian countries

ASTRA Network, an informal regional network of non-governmental organisations and individuals advocating in a collective voice for sexual and reproductive health and rights in Central and Eastern Europe, for 15 years has monitored the implementation of international agreements and commitments regarding women's human rights, especially sexual and reproductive health and rights. Among our members we have several which are countries of the Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Caucasus.

ASTRA Network representatives gathered in New York for the 59th CSW on behalf of our member organizations from EU countries would like to express vast disappointment with the unexpected change of the usual procedure of CSW working method of 2-week negotiations and the content of the Political Declaration adopted at the first day of the Commission, Monday, March 9th.

Additionally we remain concerned about the future of the Commission on the Status of Women as the future organization and methods of work of the CSW will be negotiated this week before the session closes on Friday, March 20th. We call for a coherent inclusion of civil society in the works of the Commission by securing a negotiated outcome during a 2-week session and by sustaining a women's and human rights-centered agenda.

The inclusion of civil society, women's and feminist groups as well as youth advocates is essential for transparency, accountability and – last, but not least, - remains one of the pillars of the UN system. It is also the only way to build consensus between all parties involved. Civil society is especially important in Central and Eastern Europe where for decades our voices remained unheard and marginalized or even illegal due to political reasons. With the many battles behind us and many still ahead of us we are thrilled to be able to speak, participate and input at this very special time when many international processes are taking place, especially the Beijing+20 and the Post-2015 development agendas.

We consider it necessary to include issues of all women into the works of the CSW, especially mainstreaming the language on defending women's human rights defenders, empowering women and girls and also securing their sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. ASTRA believes that now is also the time to go beyond what has been agreed upon 20 years ago and make a bold step forward by recognizing the sexual rights of all people, regardless of their gender, identity or any other status. ASTRA, as one of the regional voices advocating for the right to safe and legal abortion and comprehensive sexuality education would also like to bring the attention to the unsolved and persisting issues of unsafe and illegal abortions in countries of the Central and Eastern Europe and well as lack of comprehensive sexuality education and rising threats to women's human rights, especially reproductive rights.

We urge UN Member States of our region to commit to advance the achievement of the entire Beijing Platform of Action and recognise civil society as a significant actor within the works of the Commission on the Status of Women.

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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