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Item 4

STATEMENT
Federation for Women and Family Planning

delivered by Karolina Wieckiewicz

The Federation is thankful for the opportunity to deliver this statement on the occasion of the 47th session of the UN Commission on Population and Development.

The ICPD Program of Action and the ongoing process of implementation have been a significant tool on the way to advancement of women's reproductive rights. However, still a number of issues in many countries need to be properly addressed in order to reach desired solid improvement of women's access to reproductive health services. One of them is the critical problem of access to safe and legal abortion.

Special attention needs to be paid to the situation in countries where legal provisions limit access to abortion and make it legal only in some circumstances.

Firstly, it has been clearly established that legal abortions have to be safe. It should be understood also as an obligation to ensure that in every case in which a woman is eligible for termination under domestic law, her right is properly exercised. Several countries on different occasions have been urged to improve their health systems in order to fully guarantee access to legal abortion under domestic laws. Women who face trouble in access to lawful procedures resort to clandestine abortions which are unsafe by definition. It has to be properly addressed in order to fulfill the rule of making legal abortions safe.

Secondly, the Montevideo consensus established clearly that penalization of abortion does not reduce its number. It called upon the States to *“consider amending their laws (...) relating to the voluntary termination of pregnancy in order to protect the lives and health of women and adolescent girls (...) and to reduce the number of abortions”*. The ICPD Program of Action is

a groundbreaking document and achievement of the international community. Nevertheless, the population and development agenda needs to take into consideration the changing circumstances and processes and be moved forward to improve the international standards and move towards better understanding of the reproductive rights issues as the Montevideo consensus did. The Federation calls upon the states to take this approach in the ICPD beyond 2014 agenda. As it has been clearly agreed on “*unsafe abortions are a threat to the health of women*” and their impact on women's health has to be seen as “*a major public health concern*”. We recommend, at a minimum, to acknowledge and recognize the factual scale of clandestine abortions in order to define its results and impact on women's health. Also, a chilling effect that penalization of illegal abortion services has on access to legal procedures has to be taken into consideration and states with such provisions should consider amending their laws. Moreover, when these issues are properly recognized and compared with experience of countries in which abortion is legal, it will become more and more clear that legalization of abortion is a good practice.

Finally, access to abortion needs to be approached in a proactive manner. It cannot be limited to the international documents based on consensus between the states but also has to take into consideration the outcome of different international human rights mechanisms which include the UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies (such as CEDAW Committee and CAT Committee) and the Human Rights Council. The call for decriminalization of reproductive health services as a measure to raise the standard of women's rights has been clearly emphasized within the framework of these mechanisms. In the Federation's opinion that is the direction the international agreement should point towards in the beyond 2014 ICPD agenda. The only way to avoid the negative health and social consequences of clandestine abortions is to make abortion legal and put a woman's dignity, bodily integrity and self-determination as the most important perspective.

Thank you for your attention.