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**HLP Roundtable: “Women’s rights and global partnership in post 2015 development agenda”**

Thank you for this opportunity to speak and directly address HLP members and advisors.

This is a chance to voice women’s concerns from the region I represent at this meeting, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. It is a region that often falls in a gray area of development, somewhere in between the global North and the Global South, consisting of both low and middle income countries, a region that seems to be in a process of constant transitions, constant transformations and that ends up in constant crises be them political, military, economical, demographical.

This particular development path shifts gender expectations in societies and sometimes these expectations are not necessarily towards more liberal, less restrictive roles as perhaps we would have hoped or imagined.

While this might seem a very regional assessment, I must say that other women taking part in the CSO preparation meetings voice my localized concerns. In brief these are:

- Ending violence against women,
- Access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and
- The worrisome rise of populist politics and religious fundamentalisms specifically targeting women’s rights.

These are areas of concern for many women’s organizations present at the meeting. Emphasis may differ but priorities are pretty much the same.

There are many forms of violence against women and many of these forms are ignored, including intimate-partner violence, its intersection with HIV, as well as forms of violence in public spaces such as:

- rape and harassment,
- forced sterilizations and abortions in health care facilities,
- sexual violence in refugee camps.

**Ending all forms of violence is key to ensure that women are first of all physically able to participate and benefit from development.** Without a commitment to ensure women’s physical security, bodily integrity and personal comfort we cannot talk of women as active agents of development nor can we talk about people-centered development.

Moreover, it is important to stress that while rooted in broad structural inequalities, ending violence against women is nonetheless a concrete achievable goal for which we can easily identify targets and indicators. (Some of this work has already been

done and women's NGOs already have lists of proposed targets and indicators which we will be very happy to share with HLP members).

I would like to stress the relevance of the recently agreed conclusions from CSW on violence against women. This is a concrete example of achieving to large degree a political global consensus on ending violence against but the question remains on how to further profit from this consensus and secure the very material means to implement such an important commitment. What kind of partnerships need to be built? How can we ensure financial support to make concrete steps towards the eradication of VAW and how can we include accountability mechanisms so that "ending violence against women" is not merely noble slogan but becomes a concrete commitment for governments.

In my daily life I work for a center for victims of domestic violence and ensuring that we get funding for our day to day operations is actually the most challenging part of my work. Ending violence against women needs constant flow of finances that cannot be insured merely through philanthropy or CSR. We need committed public funds, we need to find solutions for raising these funds, we need to secure partnerships both at national and at regional levels, centered on women's rights and in the interests of women. This is the road in which we want to see the global partnership discussions going.

Ending violence against women is a sound and basic first step towards promoting leadership of women at all levels and also a fundamental prerequisite for gender equality, sustainable development and genuine democracy.

Secondly, yet very much connected to the fundamentals of ensuring women's meaningful role in development is universal access to sexual and reproductive health and the safeguarding of sexual and reproductive rights. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are central to human development and interlink to all key development agendas: equality, human rights, poverty, migration and population dynamics, food security and access to resources, health.

The main concern here is to remove all barriers (legal, social, economic) so that women and teen girls can access sexual and reproductive health services including contraceptives, safe abortion, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections and HIV, reproductive cancers and safe deliveries.

We need to make sure that women have the information and the means to decide independently when and how many children they want to have and once they do that we need to make sure that they do not risk their lives whenever they make such decisions. And in case the public was not aware illegal abortions are also very expensive. They cost women significant parts of their household budgets and sometimes their lives. This last point brings us back to the issues of today, equitable resource allocation.

Many women are voicing concerns over the rising costs of health care and essential medicine. At an earlier point in history access to health care was embedded in the UN Human Rights charter, today we often end up talking about the affordability of health care as if ill health is something we can ever afford. Of course, as the

director of WHO recently said, “there’s no free lunch” and solid financing mechanisms need to be addressed. However, public-private partnerships in the health sector and I include here pharmaceuticals/contraceptives/ARVs have to take into account that health is a universal right and a common good, one that raises ethical problems in relation to profit seeking. We have to make sure that within such partnerships women and women’s organizations and the feminist movement plays a part.

Sexual rights are fundamental human rights and within that acknowledgement we ask that laws and policies that discriminate on the basis of gender, criminalize or marginalize specific groups of women based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, participation in sex work, or other status be repealed.

Rising populist politics and fundamentalisms have a way of focusing their politics over the control of women’s bodies and LGBTQI lives. Governments and supra-national institutions need to ensure and guarantee that all people have control over their private lives as individuals and that acts of discrimination (including in law) find redress in justice. The principle of non-discrimination is closely bound with the principle of equality that we hope to see imbedded in the post 2015 agenda and to those of human rights that drive all UN efforts.

Ending all forms of violence against women, granting everyone (including women and youth) access to sexual and reproductive health and upholding sexual and reproductive rights within the context of rising populist politics are the concerns that we need to see addressed in the post 2015 framework.

To conclude, I want to refer to one of the publicity slogans of this meeting. “**Global partnership: a marriage of profit and sustainability**” is written on one of the billboards outside this hotel. Women’s rights NGOs present here refuse exactly this alliance of profit in development and hope for a transformative union based on equitable partnership, autonomy, and a good dose of idealism in tackling development problems.

Thank you for your attention and patience!

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