

FEDERATION FOR WOMEN AND FAMILY PLANNING – statement

Thank you Mister President.

It is my pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of the Federation for Women and Family Planning, ASTRA Central and Eastern European Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Health, the Association for Gender Equality and Liberty – A.L.E.G Romania (Asociația pentru Libertate și Egalitate de Gen) and the Sexual Rights Initiative<sup>1</sup>.

We are concerned about high rates of teen pregnancies among adolescents in Romania. We call upon the Romanian government to recognize this problem as well as to acknowledge that comprehensive and common sexuality education is a key tool to prevent unwanted pregnancies, also among teenagers. The lack of gender-sensitive and non-biased sexuality education remains a problem in Romania and it requires immediate and appropriate actions by the State. We welcome the declaration of accepting the recommendation made by Slovenia in this regard. We recommend the State to urgently introduce mandatory comprehensive sexuality education in all schools according to the current legal provisions under domestic law that are not realized in practice. We also recommend introducing policies regarding youth friendly and free of charge family planning services and access to subsidized contraceptives for youth in order to raise the knowledge and awareness about possibilities of controlling one's fertility among adolescents. Additionally we urge the State to take all appropriate measures to enable young girls who are pregnant or have children to be able to complete their education in order not to cause additional risk of social exclusion in the future.

Many States have recognized the problem of not sufficient efforts undertaken by the Romanian Government to combat violence against women. We share that concern and welcome the fact that recommendations made in this regard were accepted by the Romanian State. Additionally we urge the State of Romania to sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Introducing certain provisions of this Convention is necessary to protect victims and survivors of violence. It presents a modern and human rights oriented approach to the issue of violence against women and establishes progressive measures to ensure that it is addressed in an appropriate manner. One of the strongest standards introduced by the Convention is the rule of launching criminal proceedings in case of rape and other sexual violence acts *ex officio* by public law enforcement institutions. The newly adopted law in Romania allows for violent crimes such as rape or domestic violence to be solved through civil mediation. Such a regulation clearly goes against the Istanbul Convention. Therefore, the recommendation to sign and ratify the Istanbul Convention becomes crucial as it is an important benchmark for recognizing women as active citizens demanding state guarantees for their protection and well-being.

We also call upon the Romanian government to continue the policy of guaranteeing wide access to abortion services and to contraceptives, including subsidizing it from the state budget especially for young people and other vulnerable groups. Such a policy could be included in the national strategy for sexual and reproductive rights that has been recommended by the Netherlands and accepted by the Romanian government.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> The Sexual Rights Initiative is a coalition of organizations comprising of Action Canada for Population and Development (ACPD), Akahata, Coalition of African Lesbians, Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA), Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) and Federation for Women and Family Planning (FWFP).