

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

47th Session of the UN Commission on Population and Development

Governments Call for Increased Efforts to Promote Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights in Development Policies and Identify Gaps in Human Rights and Health of Women and Young People

The 47th session of the Commission on Population and Development ended early Saturday morning, April 12th with a call from governments to promote gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as key priorities for sustainable development. The Commission urged world leaders to integrate these rights into the new development framework that will replace the Millennium Development Goals, which are set to expire in 2015.

The weeklong (April 7-11, 2014) Commission was convened at the UN headquarters in New York to assess 20 years of progress since the groundbreaking agreements made at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994. At Cairo, 179 governments agreed that women's health and rights—specifically sexual and reproductive health and reproductive

rights—must be central to global development policies, programs, and funding, and are the key to reducing the social and economic inequalities that exist worldwide.

At this critical juncture in the post-2015 process, governments have renewed the commitments made in Cairo in 1994 and since. The right to control one's fertility and sexuality is fundamental to social and sustainable development and governments have agreed it should be a core part of the next development agenda. Now we need strong leadership from governments to lead us into the next fifteen years.

Despite significant progress since Cairo, the Commission recognized that the global community has yet to fulfill the promise of equitable and universal access to quality, integrated sexual and reproductive health care services. To address these gaps, the Commission urged governments to expand access to confidential and non-discriminatory sexual and reproductive heath-care services for youth and adolescents, including comprehensive, evidence-based education on human sexuality and measures to prevent and treat HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. The Commission also called on governments to train and equip health-service providers to ensure that, in circumstances where abortion is not against the law, abortion is safe and accessible, and to intensify efforts to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support without stigma and discrimination.

To move the vision of Cairo forward, the Commission called on governments to respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights of women and girls, including their sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and to address persistent inequalities and "discrimination on any grounds," including through the unfair and discriminatory application of laws. It further called on governments to establish affirmative action plans to promote the development of Afro-descendent populations and indigenous peoples. The Commission also expressed deep concern about the pervasiveness of gender-based violence and reiterated the need to intensify efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and harmful practices, including child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Throughout the week, many governments expressed strong support for advancing the human rights of all to control all aspects of their sexuality, collectively known as "sexual rights". In addition, 59 governments explicitly called for action to end discrimination and violence on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The calls came from countries as diverse as the Philippines, South Africa, the Pacific Islands, Viet Nam, Nepal, Mongolia, Suriname, the United States, Australia, Norway, the European Union, and most Latin American countries. These calls build on similar agreements made during regional reviews of ICPD in Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific in 2013.

However, a striking lack of transparency and due process during the negotiations allowed a small group of conservative countries and the Holy See to block language on sexual rights in the final agreement. These same governments also made several vitriolic attacks on the role of civil society in a clear attempt to silence progressive voices. The 11th hour move to block sexual rights elicited strong rebukes from many government delegations during the closing plenary: "Our governments will not be pushed backward for fear of accepting reality," said the Philippines, while South Africa called for more "inclusive societies" and Norway stated that "discrimination and violence on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity should not be tolerated in any society."

Despite the fact that African governments affirmed sexual rights in a regional Ministerial agreement on ICPD Beyond 2014 in October 2013, many African delegations refused to accept inclusion of the term in the global agreement. Nevertheless, the support for sexual rights expressed in the room was unprecedented, and marked an historical moment in the ongoing struggle for universal human rights.

Governments will reconvene in September at the UN General Assembly to renew political support for the actions required to achieve the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action.

ASTRA delegation for the 47th CPD consisted of representatives from Macedonia, Bulgaria and Poland. ASTRA has also prepared a written statement for this session, access it here. Representative of the Federation for Women and Family Planning, Polish ASTRA member, delivered oral statement on Thursday April 10th calling for decriminalization of reproductive health services, especially abortion services, as a measure to raise the standard of women's rights and move the ICPD beyond 2014 agenda forward.

Source: <u>UN Population Division</u>, <u>UN News Center</u>, <u>ASTRA Network</u>

REGIONAL UPDATES

"One of Us" - regressive European Citizens' Initiative

The "One of Us" initiative is the latest in a series of recent attacks on gender equality, women's rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights in Europe and around the world. Ultra-conservative and anti-choice groups and politicians in Europe – some of whom who currently sit in the European Parliament – are now seeking to undermine the EU's strong stance in support of women in the world's poorest countries. The aim of 'One of Us' is to block any EU funding for activities that could involve the destruction of human embryos, whether through research or through the provision of indirect or direct abortion or 'abortion-related' services in low and middle-income countries. Such a move would pose a real and worrying threat to gender equality, women's rights and sexual, maternal, and reproductive health and rights in Europe and around the world. MEP and Chair of the Women's Rights Committee Mikael Gustafsson said: "The 'One of Us' campaign completely contradicts the EU's development aid aims as well as commitments it has made as part of the Millennium Development Goals. Almost 800 women in the developing world die every day during pregnancy and childbirth. We simply cannot stand for any abolition of essential EU support for maternal healthcare, pre-natal care and voluntary family planning services in some of the world's poorest countries."

Source: GUE/NGL, European Parliament, European Humanist Federation

European Parliament's role in supporting SRHR under discussion

On April 8th, the European Parliament Working Group (EPWG) on Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS and

Development organised its last session in the current legislative period. The event was aimed at discussing the Parliament's role in safeguarding and increasing support to sexual and reproductive

health and rights (SRHR). Speakers from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Federación de Planificación Familiar de España (Spanish Family Planning Federation), the European

Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (EPF) and Marie Stopes International (MSI)

were present.

During the debate, Member of Parliament (MEP) Sophie in 't Veld (ALDE, Netherlands), and MEP

Michael Cashman (S&D, UK) co-chairs of the EPWG, reaffirmed that they 'will do everything to stop initiatives from fundamentalists who are anti-women's rights, anti-SRHR and anti-lesbian, gay,

bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) agenda'. MEP in 't Veld stressed the importance of the next EP

composition, given the EP role in approving financial envelops and scrutinizing implementation of EU

cooperation programmes; she then presented a pledge for continued support to SRHR in the next

European Parliament legislature and called for her fellow MEPs to

To access the pledge, please click here.

Source: DSW nEUws

Common statement on the future of ECtHR

A conference devoted to "The Long-Term Future of the European Court of Human Rights" was held in

Oslo, Norway on April 7-8, 2014. The conference was organized under the auspices of the Council of Europe and was one of the most important debates on the future of the European Court of Human

Rights (ECtHR) since the Brighton Conference held on 18-20 April 2012. A coalition of nongovernmental organizations coming from Central and Eastern Europe took the opportunity to recall

the fundamentals lying behind the adoption of the Convention - read the Central and Eastern

European NGOs statement on the Future of the European Court of Human Rights online HERE.

Source: **ASTRA Network**

The Istanbul Convention will become binding on August 1, 2014

Andorra became the 10th member state of the Council of Europe to ratify the Istanbul Convention.

The "Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence" - known informally as the "Istanbul Convention" - is the first European treaty specifically targeting violence against women and domestic violence. It sets out minimum standards

on prevention, protection, prosecution, and services. Countries ratifying must also establish services

such as hotlines, shelters, medical services, counselling, and legal aid. The Convention will then enter

into force on 1 August 2014. Learn more about the Convention here.

Source: <u>Human Rights Watch</u>

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Poland rejected the draft law on comprehensive sexuality education.

Members of the Parliament voted against the bill introducing "Knowledge on human sexuality" as a compulsory subject in primary, middle and secondary schools. 368 MPs voted for rejection of the draft with only 63 opposite votes. The bill was submitted by the Vice-Deputy Speaker of the Sejm Wanda Nowicka and signed up to by the left-wing deputies. Earlier, in December 2013 there was the first reading of the draft law in the Parliamentary Commission of Education, Science and Youth. The Commission recommended rejecting of the project and after a heated parliamentary debate, the

Members of Parliament followed accordingly.

Source: PONTON Group of Sex Educators

"Citizenship for whom? Engendering citizenship: a key to democracy" international conference took place on Wednesday 9th April in the European Parliament in Brussels. The event was organised by the GUE-NGL Group and the FEMM Committee in cooperation with the European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI. Among speakers was Krystyna Kacpura, Executive Director of the Federation for Women and Family Planning, who highlighted the fact that reproductive rights are key area for gender equality and therefore they should be included into the concept of citizenship – understood not only as a status or identity, but also, and more importantly, as a practice and a process of exercising and claiming of rights and of participation in governance and civil society. She also stressed that women have been extended citizenship rights on the same terms as men, instead of citizenship that accommodate women's specific interest. Fundamental to citizenship is the reproductive freedom understood as both access to safe abortion and favourable conditions and resources to raise children. In the second part of her speech, Krystyna Kacpura described the status of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the Central and Eastern Europe as well as women's access to SRHR services in Poland.

Gaby Zimmer, the Chair of the GUE-NGL Group, emphasized that democracy and gender equality are crucial for achieving justice and women have played an active role in fighting for justice. Michael Gustafsson, Chair of the FEMM Committee, underlined that there has been a very serious regression in the issue of women's rights, even the European Parliament experiences a crisis of equality and democracy. He also highlighted the need to provide financial support for women's organizations in order to move forward equality and SRHR issues.

The programme of the event can be accessed <u>here</u>.

View the recommendations from the event <u>here</u>.

Source: Federation for Women and Family Planning, European Feminist Initiative

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GLOBAL UPDATES

47th CPD Side Event: Uniting for Safe Legal Abortion: A Call to Action for 2014 and Beyond

This April 10th side event highlighted progress and challenges in addressing unsafe abortion since it was put on the global agenda in the 1994 ICPD Program of Action. Speakers provided 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 was 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. A recap of the event is available online on **Storify**.

Source: IPAS

47th CPD Side Event of the High Level Task Force for ICPD: "Celebrating Cairo & Going Beyond"

The High Level Task Force for ICPD hosted a side event on April 8th at which leading global figures in the field of human rights discussed 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 were Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Head of UNFPA, Navi Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Wanda Nowicka, Wanda Nowicka, Deputy Speaker of Poland's Lower House of Parliament and Member of the High-Level Task Force for the ICPD. The program included a video message from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

"Sexual and reproductive rights are human rights," said Navi Pillay. "They are not new rights, and they are not optional. At the very core of these rights is the right to autonomy, which involves deeply personal issues such as whether, when, how and with whom any individual chooses to have sex; whether, when, and whom one chooses to marry; whether, when, how and with whom one chooses to have children; and how we choose to express gender and sexuality."

Source: <u>High Level Task Force for ICPD</u>

6th International Parliamentarians' Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD Programme of **Action**

The sixth International Parliamentarians' Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action (IPCI/ICPD) took place in Stockholm on April 23-25. Parliamentarians from 125 countries gathered in Stockholm to discuss the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and reaffirmed the rights of all people, especially girls, young people and women. They have recognized and further reaffirmed the need for the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, and acknowledged the findings and recommendations of the ICPD global review. Legislators and leaders of societies committed themselves to advocate for laws and policies that respect and protect the sexual and reproductive rights of all individuals.

The Executive Director of UNFPA, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin said at ICPI conference: "What I find is that some governments don't have the courage to actually go and do what they need to do. They don't want to talk about sexuality education and they don't want to talk about contraception. There is a need to elevate the conversation so that the reality of what we're talking about effects action among governments, political leaders and community leaders." He also said that UNFPA doesn't "get into abortion" because the organisation respects the rights of sovereign states to make their own laws. "But we insist that in countries where it is legal, it should be performed safely, and in those countries where it is not legal, they should have empathy and compassion so that post-abortion care is available," said UNFPA Executive Director.

The Conference provided the parliamentarians with an opportunity to contribute to the United Nations Secretary-General's index report on further implementation of the ICPD beyond 2014, to be discussed at the UN General Assembly Special Session on the ICPD in September, 2014. The conference ended with the **Stockholm Statement of Commitment** - available here.

Source: Inter Press Service, www.ipci2014.org, UNFPA

11th session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals

The Co-Chairs of the UN Open Working Group have released the revised working document on goals and targets for the SDGs, in preparation for the May 5th to 9th session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG-11).

The Programme of Work for the OWG-11 is available <u>online</u>. In addition to the <u>revised focal areas</u> <u>document</u> the co-chairs have also posted the <u>compilation of proposed Goals and targets</u> from the previous session.

Source: NGOs Beyond 2014

Poland became member of UN Women Executive Board

Poland became a member of the Executive Board of <u>UN Women</u> for the years 2014-2016. UN Women is the leading entity in the UN system in the area of the promotion of women's rights. During the first regular session of 2014, Poland, together with Australia, Senegal and Solomon Islands, was elected to the bureau of the Executive Board with the President from Uruguay. Taking the floor on this occasion, the Polish PR, Ambassador Ryszard Sarkowicz, addressed among others the issue of women's participation and leadership in peace and security activities and in the humanitarian response.

Source: Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations in New York

YOUTH

Young People Speak up for their Sexual and Reproductive Rights at 47th CPD

Over 100 young people from across the globe, including ASTRA Youth representatives, came together during the 47th session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) to let governments know that their sexual and reproductive rights are non-negotiable. The weeklong Commission was convened at the UN headquarters in New York to assess 20 years of progress since the groundbreaking agreements made at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994. At Cairo, 179 governments agreed that women's health and rights—specifically sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights—must be central to global development policies, programs, and funding, and are the key to reducing the social and economic inequalities that exist worldwide.

Prior to the CPD a Youth Caucus was organized, which allowed young people to come together and discuss how to ensure their voices are heard and the young people's rights are treated seriously. Throughout the week, young people representing civil society from all regions and diversities spoke up on sexual and reproductive rights issues ranging from comprehensive sexuality education to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services; access to safe and legal abortion; and recognition of the human rights of all people, including young people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.

There was a strong presence online and offline, with young people participating in and leading side events on youth participation, advancing youth sexual and reproductive health, and acknowledging young people's sexual and reproductive rights in the post-2015 development framework as well as presenting eight oral statements to the Commission.

For a complete overview of youth participation at the 47th Session of the CPD, please read <u>the Youth Caucus Media Kit</u>.

Source: **ASTRA Youth**

Safe Chair? Campaign for a good gynecological care in Poland

On 14th April, <u>Ponton Group of Sex Educators</u> organized a press conference in order to present results of the latest survey concerning reproductive health services (the quality of gynecological care) conducted during the campaign "Safe Chair? Campaign for a good gynecological care". Ponton conducted an online survey to discover the experience and identify expectations of all girls and women: those who regularly have gynecological consultations, those who have had it once and those who haven't had any yet. 2501 girls and women filled the survey, including LBTQ persons and persons with disabilities.

The results are worrisome as they prove that women, especially young girls, and LBTQ persons experience unprofessional and harmful treatment from the gynecologists. 1/4 of girls and

women treat gynecological visit as 'necessary evil' and 16% of respondents avoid visits. The reason for this is embarrassment and lack of awareness about caring for one's sexual and reproductive health. Comprehensive sexuality education still hasn't been introduced in Polish schools and sexuality (even in its health aspect) remains a taboo. These factors combined with traumatic experiences during gynecological visits result in the negligence of prophylaxis. Girls and women hear judgmental statements and opinions from gynecologists, which express lack of empathy, professional approach, gender stereotypes, homophobia and transphobia. Doctors comment on decisions concerning patients' private lives and instead of a diagnosis, they provide judgments based on their personal values. Furthermore, women (especially young girls) are refused contraception and access to diagnostic tests due to gynecologists' personal views, based on prejudices. What is also alarming, 1/3 girls and women haven't been to the visit yet because of the deeply rooted fear of shame. They are scared of negative comments from the doctor and treat the visit as intrusion of the intimacy. If they had received the proper information and support earlier, these women wouldn't have avoided the visits and instead, they would have treated the gynecological visit as a means of caring for their reproductive and sexual health. In order to improve this situation, decision-makers need to introduce a non-biased, science-based comprehensive sexuality education to schools, which would raise knowledge and awareness of sexual and reproductive health. The system of gynecologists' education needs to be improved as the needs of young patients, LBTQ patients and patients with disabilities must be accommodated in the gynecologists' training programmes.

Source: PONTON Group of Sex Educators

UPCOMING EVENTS

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. To register and see the conference programme click here.

Source: www.planning-familial.org

The European Humanist Federation will hold its annual conference "Humanists and the challenge of Rusing extremisms in Europe" on Saturday May 10th in Brussels. Over the last years, secularism and human rights have been strongly challenged by rising extremisms throughout Europe with far-right partie being strengthened in almost all European coutries accompanied by nationalistic and religious groups. Among speakers are: Pierre galand, EHF President, Neil Datta, Secretary of the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development and Eef Wuyts from IPPF European Network. Registration is free of charge, for more details click <a href="https://example.com/here-charge-cha

Source: <u>European Humanist Federation</u>

The Istanbul Summit - Women's Perspectives UN Post 2015 Development Agenda will bring together women representatives of NGOs, private sector and international organizations, experts and activist to discuss UN Post 2015 Development Agenda. Prof. Barbara Adams of Global Forum, Chantal Line Carpentier of UN DSD, and Dr. Nafis Sadik, special envoy to the UN Secretary General are among the speakers at the Summit. The summit will provide opportunities for your NGO to share their opinion on proposed SDGs by submitting written and oral statements. The Working Groups will focus on eight themes: Eradication of Poverty, Women's Empowerment, Health, Education, Food Security, Water Supply and Sanitation, Environment, Climate Change and Energy, Sustainable Economic Development and Peace and Good Governance (Human Rights Framework and Accountability Mechanisms).

Source: http://istanbulsummit.org

EU Elections in May

On 22-25 May, European Union voters will go to the polls to elect 751 new MEPs and decide which direction Europe should follow. For more information on the details and logistics visit the European Parliament online and <u>Poll Watch 2014</u> for regular predictions of the outcome of the 2014 European Parliament elections.

Source: European Elections 2014

PUBLICATIONS

Adolescent and Young People SRHR Agenda - Central and Eastern Europe Brief

ASTRA Youth in cooperation with <u>ARROW</u> developed a brief on adolescent and young people's SRHR in Central and Eastern Europe. It covers the most burning issues of young people and gives a glimpse into the specifics of the region. Access it online <u>HERE</u>.

Joint ASTRA, EuroNGOs, Countdown 2015 Europe and IPPF EN Position Paper on Post 2015

Over 87 European NGOs across 42 European countries joined forces to call upon their governments and other likeminded states to express strong support for universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) at the upcoming 11th session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through a joint position paper, representatives from the European SRHR civil society called on their governments to live up to the pledge - made at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio 20) in June 2012 – to work toward an aspirational set of Sustainable Development Goals. In a letter addressed to all European delegations, the members of the EuroNGOs, Countdown 2015 Europe, IPPF EN and ASTRA networks stated: "A truly transformative agenda requires going beyond the minimum standards set out in the 1990s. In

doing so it must recognize that sexual and reproductive health and rights: cut across the economic, social and environmental components of sustainable development; contribute to accelerate progress under each of the current MDGs; and are key components of the measures that must be taken to respect and protect human rights, empower women and young people and eliminate inequalities."

Read the joint position paper <u>EveryONE</u>, <u>ALWAYS</u>, <u>EveryWHERE</u>. <u>The European SRHR Community's</u> <u>position on the post-2015 agenda</u>.

UNECE regional report on ICPD Beyond 2014

The UNECE regional report on ICPD Beyond 2014 contains the summary of the findings, trends and persisting issues on the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action in the UNECE region. It contains interesting facts and figures from the region and has references to SRHR, in line with the key areas that were identified in CSO meeting in Geneva which ASTRA had the opportunity to co-host with IPPF and EWL in early July 2013. It has some interesting data on abortion, sexuality education, gender equality, young people and cooperation between CSOs and the Government and much more.

Click <u>here</u> to access the English version, and <u>here</u> to access the Russian version.

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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