



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

7th and 8th session of intergovernmental negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

July intergovernmental negotiations on the Post-2015 development agenda

The seventh and eighth session of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda was held from 20th to 31st July. The last two sessions focused on the negotiations on the revised outcome document. During the 7th session UN Member States mostly expressed their country positions on specific segments of the agenda: Declaration, Goals and Targets, Means of Implementation, and Follow-up and review. They also delivered language-specific recommendations to be taken into consideration by Co-facilitators while preparing the next draft of the agenda. Several States emphasized in their interventions the necessity to underscore gender equality, women's and girls' empowerment and sexual and reproductive health and rights and strengthen language on these issues in the agenda. The paragraph on family, highlighting its role as contributor to sustainable development, raised concerns among the States. Disappointingly, little

attention was paid to young people, with focus of few States on youth rights, employment and demographic dividend.

The States' interventions served as guidance for civil society representatives, among whom many reiterated the importance of gender equality, women's rights and human rights; necessity to take action on health, education and development; and inclusion of youth and adolescents in the Post-2015 agenda. Statements of civil society are accessible to read [here](#). ASTRA Youth as Youth Leadership Working Group representative attended the seventh IGN session and advocated to CEE region's UN Member States for prioritization of youth SRHR and youth participation in the implementation and follow-up and review of the Post-2015 agenda as well as collaborated with civil society on statements related to aforementioned issues.

The last session focused on negotiating over the revised outcome document of the Post-2015 agenda. Member States delivered interventions on specific amendments to the document and civil society contributed to the process with providing its language recommendations related to SRHR, gender equality, women's and youth rights. On Tuesday 28th July Major Groups and other stakeholders had an opportunity to deliver their recommendations during the meeting with Co-facilitators. ASTRA representative attended the session and advocated among countries of the region for visible support for gender equality and SRHR issues.

After a very long process the outcome document was successfully adopted in the evening of Sunday, August 2nd. The United Nations Post-2015 development agenda has been adopted by consensus by 193 member states! This commitment is a turning point for the world, ensuring that no part of the population is overlooked or left behind. Heads of the 193 United Nations Member States will convene at the UN on September 25-27 to formally adopt the SDGs and the post-2015 agenda.

Access the most recent Post-2015 Outcome Document "Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" [HERE](#).

[Statement by the Secretary-General following agreement on the Outcome Document of the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#)

Source: [ASTRA Youth](#), [NGOsBeyond2014](#), [Sustainable Development](#)

REGIONAL UPDATES

U.N. Committee Calls on Croatia to Expand Reproductive Health Services and End Discrimination Against Women

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) has called on the Croatian government to take concrete steps to improve the quality of care provided to pregnant women during child birth. It also called on Croatia to ensure women can access reproductive health services in practice, including legal abortion, regardless of health professionals' personal objections.

In its [concluding observations](#), the CEDAW Committee urged Croatia to guarantee that women's rights and autonomy and informed consent requirements are upheld during childbirth. It further recommended that Croatia ensure that health professionals' refusals to provide services on grounds of conscience not be allowed to impede women's effective access to reproductive health care services, especially abortion.

The Center for Reproductive Rights, the Center for Education, Counselling and Research ([CESI](#)) and Parents in Action ([RODA](#)), made a [joint submission](#) to the CEDAW Committee regarding the failure of the Croatian government to ensure women have access to quality reproductive health services, including abortion services and modern contraceptives. The submission also addressed serious concerns about the treatment of pregnant women during childbirth in Croatian hospitals including deficits in ensuring full and informed consent to medical interventions during childbirth as well as frequent disrespectful and abusive treatment of women by medical professionals.

"Croatian women have a right to receive quality reproductive health services, but instead they face abuse, disrespectful care, and a range of obstacles to critical services, said Leah Hctor, regional director for Europe at the Center for Reproductive Rights. "The government of Croatia must take effective steps to ensure pregnant women giving birth receive medical care that respects their needs and wishes."

Abortion in Croatia is legal within the first 10 weeks of pregnancy and thereafter under limited circumstances, including when the pregnancy is a result of a crime, if the pregnancy put a woman's health or life at risk and in cases of severe fetal impairments. However, women are facing increasing difficulties in accessing legal abortion services in practice. According to 2014 research by the Gender Equality Ombudsperson, more than half of gynecologists in Croatia do not provide legal abortion services due to their personal objections.

The joint submission to the CEDAW Committee also included findings from RODA's 2015 Survey on Experiences in Maternity Services that reported a large number of pregnant women being subjected to procedures that can be harmful to their physical and mental health, including 54 percent of women alleging that health professionals applied heavy pressure to their abdomens to speed up the delivery, a procedure not supported by medical evidence.

Source: [Center for Reproductive Rights](#)

Armenia's second Universal Periodic Review

As stated in UN Armenia report concerning Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and Armenia's participation in it, the UPR is a unique process which involves a periodic review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States. Since its first meeting held in April 2008, all 193 UN member States have been reviewed during the first UPR cycle and 112 during the second cycle. The second review of States highlighted human rights developments in the country since its first review and provided an opportunity for States under review to present the steps taken to implement recommendations posed during their first reviews.

Armenia was one of the 14 States reviewed by the UPR Working Group during its second session that took place from 19 to 30 January 2015. Armenia participated in the UPR review already in May 2010. Armenian civil society has also participated actively in the second UPR cycle of Armenia under the auspices of the Open Society Foundations. A broad coalition of independent non-governmental organizations developed a shadow report for the 21st Session of the UPR. Another shadow report on women's and LGBT rights specifically was prepared by Pink Armenia, Society Without Violence, Women's Resource Center and Women's Support Center in cooperation with the Human Rights House Yerevan. It should be mentioned that the steps taken towards the implementation of the recommendations of Armenia's first UPR by the state under review were insufficient as there were high number of recommendations repeated during the second review. The main reason of this recurrence is that Armenia either failed to take actions to fulfill the accepted recommendations, or the taken actions had merely formal nature. Even though Human Rights Defender's Institution of Armenia recorded positive steps taken by Armenia but highlighted the serious challenges that still need to be addressed in the fields of the prevention and prosecution of torture, detention conditions, children and domestic violence.

During consideration of Armenia's UPR, States praised for having ratified several international covenants, for the adoption of a national strategy and plan of action for the protection of human rights and for improvements to its legal framework on human rights. However, many challenges persist within the country, including excessive use of force by the police, corruption and a lack of judicial independence. Improper policing of assemblies is also a serious issue in Armenia, with the State being urged to guarantee the right to peaceful assembly, including the right to spontaneous protest.

Armenia received very important [recommendations](#) from the State parties on women's rights, gender based discrimination and violence, domestic violence and women's participation in decision making. The absolute majority of the recommendations did include parts on women's issues, which make these issues a priority. Many of the State expressed concerns about the fact that the draft law on domestic violence was rejected and recommended to have a stand-alone law. The issue of human rights defenders' security was also mentioned. Australia made reference to the recent attacks against women NGOs and condemned the hate attacks toward them. There were important recommendations such as to include in Armenia's legislation an explicit and comprehensive definition of discrimination against women, and improve legal provisions prohibiting discrimination against women. As stated in the report Armenia had implemented comprehensive legal reforms to bring the national legislation fully in line with international best practices on the prevention of torture and violence. It has adopted the Strategic Programmed against Gender Violence that

defined the core directions of the State's policy for reducing gender based violence. The members of Armenian delegation stated that Armenia is discussing the possibility of signing the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence.

Armenia received 189 recommendations and fully supported 155 of them. Further [the government of Armenia](#) stated that the majority of the recommendations were useful for the continuation of efforts to consolidate the human rights agenda, including on judicial reform, strengthening the rights of vulnerable groups, and combatting violence against women. It also stated that the issue of adoption of the standalone Law on Domestic Violence is under consideration.

During the UPR's 29th session great importance was attached to the implementation of the judicial reforms and the principle of non-discrimination. Reports prepared by civil society organizations played crucial role in evaluating state performance on the issues mentioned above and their contribution in UPR are highly appreciated.

Source: [Society Without Violence](#)

Strategy for implementation of Istanbul Convention has been adopted by Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers adopted the Framework Strategy for Implementation of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence for the period 2015-2018. Bosnia and Herzegovina became one of the first countries in Europe which adopted public-political document for implementation of Istanbul Convention and became obliged to combat violence against women and domestic violence. Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence was adopted in Istanbul on 11th May 2011. After many recommendations of Council of Europe on the prohibition of gender based discrimination and protection from violence, which were aimed to set common goals and common minimum standards for the Member States, but which did not have a legally binding effect, the Convention is the first legally binding act of the Council of Europe in the field of prevention and combating violence against women. This document may not be directly applicable in the States Parties, but for its successful implementation special adaptation of legal and institutional framework of the States Parties is required.

On November 7th, 2013 Bosnia and Herzegovina became 6th state party of Council of Europe which ratified this Convention.

Source: [Sarajevo Open Centre](#)

Polish Parliament makes trans history

On Thursday, July 23 lower chamber of the Polish Parliament (Sejm), passed the Gender Accordance Act, the country's first gender recognition legislation in history. Being part of a long parliamentary procedure and under constant criticism and attacks coming from conservative media, after its initial submission by Anna Grodzka, Poland's first openly trans MP, in May 2012, the Act passed the vote with an overwhelming result of 252 votes for, 158 against and 11 abstaining.

“It is a huge victory for trans people in Poland” says Wiktor Dynarski, President and Executive Director of Trans-Fuzja Foundation, a human rights organization dedicated to work both for the rights and support of Polish trans communities. “For the past few days we have seen members of parliament advocating both against and for the law, but it was for the first time that we actually heard Polish policy makers openly protecting bodily autonomy of trans people and recognizing that trans citizens need to have their dignity assured”.

Although Poland already had a long history of legal gender recognition, dating back to the 1960s, the process was never codified and was a subject of confusing court proceedings. These proceedings have forced trans people seeking recognition to confront their parents and children in a court of law, have an expert witness assess their diagnosis of gender dysphoria and in the end wait for a ruling between 4 months to even years. The legal battle didn't always end there, as Poland did not issue new birth certificates for its citizens and did not have a mechanism to ensure that all employment and education history was properly adjusted to a person's new personal data.

The Gender Accordance Act ensures that no one, except for the applicant, is involved in the gender recognition process. To apply for recognition the applicant will need to fulfill three necessary prerequisites: be a Polish citizen, be unmarried, present two independent confirmations (not older than 12 months) of 'being a person of a different gender identity than the gender legally assigned' prepared either by a clinical psychologist who is also a sexologist, a psychiatrist or a sexologist who is also a medical doctor. The application will then be assessed by a regional court in Łódź (which will also be the only court assessing these applications) within 3 months of submission and legal recognition will be available without any medical interventions, including hormone therapy. Trans people will also receive a new birth certificate and new documentation proving their education and employment history.

“We are not done yet” explains Lalka Podobińska, Trans-Fuzja's Vice-President and Advocacy Office, “We made history with the lower chamber, but there is still the Senate and the President. And they also need to understand that it is time for trans people in Poland to have a decent piece of legislation regulating their various needs. We are optimistic though. We made the majority of policy makers understand how important legal gender recognition is”.

Trans-Fuzja admits, however, that the Gender Accordance Act is not shaped exactly the way they imagined. “There are still a number of issues to address – self-determination, securing parental rights of trans people, abolishing forced divorce and the citizenship requirement, bringing back state-funded transition healthcare as well as updating current standards of care, and many others that we want and will work on. This Act is our first step to a better reality for trans people in our country. An important first step that took us three years to take” – concludes Podobińska.

If the Gender Accordance Act is passed by the Senate and signed by the President, it will become law in January 2016.

Source: [Trans-Fuzja](#)

Bill aiming to introduce a total ban of abortion back in the Polish Sejm

The civic initiative “Stop Abortion” has once again brought the anti-choice agenda to the Sejm, the lower chamber of the Polish Parliament. The civic bill signed by 400 000 citizens aims to introduce a total ban of abortion. This is the fourth time the “Pro – Right to Life Foundation” aims to seriously impede the lives of women in Poland and violate their reproductive rights. All the previous attempts have been dismissed by the Polish Sejm. The bill will be voted upon by 3rd of October 2015.

Source: [TOK FM](#)

GLOBAL UPDATES

United Nations Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa

The United Nations General Assembly endorsed the new global action agenda for financing sustainable development adopted in on July 15th in Addis Ababa. The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the move as a major step that firmly puts the world “on the path to a more prosperous, just and sustainable world for this and future generations.”

The outcome document adopted at the [Third International Conference on Financing for Development](#), the [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#) contains a series of bold measures to overhaul global finance practices and generate investments for tackling a range of economic, social and environmental challenges. Building on the outcomes of previous development financing conferences held in Monterrey, Mexico, and in Doha, Qatar, the Action Agenda also addresses all sources of finance, and covers cooperation on a range of issues including technology, science, innovation, trade and capacity building and other areas to help realize the proposed sustainable development goals.

Source: [UN News Centre](#)

Joint NGO Statement for the Human Rights Committee's Day of Discussion on the Right to Life

The Center for Reproductive Rights and over 50 human rights organizations, among them ASTRA Network, from across the globe issued this joint statement on July 14th to the Human Rights Committee for its day of discussion on the right to life, calling on the Committee to take into account the risks women and girls face to their lives as a result of their gender and reproductive capacities. The statement urges the Committee to further elaborate on the measures states must take to prevent maternal mortality and morbidity, including providing quality contraception and safe abortion services. It further calls on the Committee to reaffirm the long-established principle that the right to life begins at birth, and ensure states do not misuse the right to life in order to undermine women’s fundamental human rights.

Source: [ASTRA Network](#)

Groundbreaking Human Rights Council resolutions

The United Nations [Human Rights Council](#) adopted three resolutions that advance gender equality, empowerment and the human rights of women and girls. These resolutions are entitled: Accelerating Efforts to Eliminate all Forms of Violence Against Women: Eliminating Domestic Violence; Strengthening efforts to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage; Elimination of discrimination against women.

The resolution on Accelerating Efforts to Eliminate all Forms of Violence Against Women is an annual resolution run by Canada. This year, it focused on eliminating domestic violence, which has never been the focus of a resolution at the Council before now. This is the first ever UN resolution to use the terms ‘intimate partner violence’ and ‘comprehensive sexuality education’.

The resolution on ‘Elimination of discrimination against women’ is an annual resolution run by Colombia and Mexico. The resolution this year focused on discrimination against women in cultural and family life, drawing upon the powerful annual [report](#) of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice. It was adopted by consensus, and co-sponsored by 60 countries so far.

The resolution on Strengthening efforts to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage was run by 14 countries: Argentina, Canada, Ethiopia, Honduras, Italy, Maldives, Montenegro, Netherlands, Poland, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, and Zambia. The first resolution on this issue was adopted by the Council in September 2013, and led to the development of a [report](#) and a panel discussion. This year’s resolution was the first substantive resolution at the Council on the issue. It was adopted by consensus, and co-sponsored by 88 countries so far.

The Council, through this resolution, recognizes that child, early and forced marriage violates the human rights of girls and women, and is caused primarily by deep-rooted gender inequalities, norms and stereotypes. Crucially, this is the first ever UN resolution to make reference to the human rights of girls to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, and reproductive rights. This is an advance from the 2014 UN General Assembly resolution on the same subject where girls were excluded from this reference.

Source: [Sexual Rights Initiative](#)

Vice President European Commission demands mutual recognition same-sex marriages

Vice President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans, indicated he is committed to make sure all EU Member States recognise same-sex marriages conducted abroad. He stressed that “even if you don’t want to have same-sex marriage in your country, [you should] at least have the decency to accept that other countries do have it and recognize that marriage when people move to your country who are married.” This confirms statements he made in a [speech](#) one week before, when he called it a disgrace that same-sex married couples moving to another country “run into all sorts of idiotic problems” opposite-sex couples would not face in the same situation. These problems could include loss of pension rights, inheritance, next-of-kin rights or child custody rights.

Source: [The European Parliament's Intergroup on LGBT Rights](#)

YOUTH

UN HRC Resolution on child, early and forced marriage

The United Nations Human Rights Council unanimously adopted a resolution to strengthen efforts to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage, which was co-sponsored by group of over 85 States, among which many were from the CEE region. The resolution recognizes child marriage as a violation of human rights that has broad consequences on the enjoyment of individual's human rights, such as right to education and health, including sexual and reproductive health. It also addresses child marriage as preventing individual to live life free from violence and barrier to realization of sustainable development. The document calls governments to implement national action plans on child marriage and encourages them to cooperate with civil society on a holistic response to address child marriage.

The resolution is accessible [here](#) with the signature A/HRC/29/L.15.

Source: [GirlsNotBrides](#)

UNGEI Youth Consultation on education

The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), working to increase safe and quality education opportunities for girls, is holding online consultation with youth regarding education. The consultation is held in a form of short survey with questions on experiences of young people with education system. The results will serve as important input for UNGEI's strategy for involving youth, which is going to be finalized in October.

The survey is accessible in English, Spanish and French [here](#) till 7th August.

Source: [UNGEI](#)

Launch of the World Contraception Day Ambassadors Project

Women Deliver in cooperation with Bayer has launched the World Contraception Day Ambassadors Project. The goal of the project is to equip six young leaders with knowledge and skills they need in order to collect and share stories about young people's SRHR, in particular access to contraception in their home countries. The project aims to raise awareness on youth SRHR on national level, debunk myths and combat stigma regarding youth SRHR and contraception and support positive communication among young people on their SRHR.

Source: [WCD](#)

Georgian youth activists involve in Global Dialogues contest

Youth activists from Georgian organization Real People, Real Vision (ASTRA Youth member organization) have engaged in the global contest [Global Dialogues](#). The contest aims to gather youth stories on HIV/AIDS, sexuality, violence against girls and women, drugs, alcohol and sex through submission of short videos. The contest serves as an opportunity to break the ice on taboo subjects and enable young people on issues important to them.

Real People, Real Vision ensured engagement of young people living with HIV (PLHIV), drug users and LGBTQ youth and managed to gather 153 stories from this group, out of which six got to the global level and one was chosen among the thirty best submissions. Moreover, Georgia had its representative in the Global Jury of the contest. As a follow-up action, Real People Real Vision is planning to organize a youth outdoor exhibition on the International Youth Day.

Source: [ASTRA Youth](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

AWID Forum 2016

The next AWID Forum will be held on May 5-8, 2016, in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. The goals of the AWID Forum 2016 are to: Celebrate the gains of the past 20 years by diverse social movements and critically analyze the lessons we can carry forward; Assess our current reality in the full diversity of our contexts, to locate opportunities for advancing the rights of women and other oppressed people, as well as the threats and challenges – both new and old – confronting us today; Explore strategies for mobilizing greater solidarity and collective power across diverse movements to push back the forces of oppression and tap into existing opportunities to advance shared visions for a just world; Inspire, energize and renew strength and purpose among activists and advocates from diverse locations and movements.

The call to submit a proposal to organise a session at the 2016 AWID Forum is now open. The deadline for sending applications is July 3rd, 2015.

Source: [AWID Forum 2016 Official Website](#)

PUBLICATIONS

Information series on SRHR

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) launched a new information series on sexual and reproductive health and rights. The series includes topics such as Abortion, Adolescents, HIV and AIDS, Violence against Women, LGBTI people, among others. For each topic, it provides the latest data, the human rights standards and the international agreements.

Source: [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#)

WHO launches new guideline

WHO's new guideline [Health worker roles in providing safe abortion care and post-abortion contraception](#) aims to help break down one critical barrier which limits access to safe abortion care – the lack of trained providers. It is estimated that the global deficit of skilled health-care professionals will reach 12.9 million by 2035, and the lack of specialised providers is particularly severe in regions where there is a high burden of unsafe abortion. Within countries there are often large disparities of trained safe abortion care providers, with shortages being particularly high in rural areas and the public sector. Whilst in many settings safe abortion care is limited to specialist doctors, many of the evidence-based interventions for safe abortion and post-abortion care covered in the new WHO guidance, particularly for those in early pregnancy, can be provided on an outpatient basis at the primary-care level – such as medical abortion, which is non-surgical abortion using medications.

WHO's new guideline helps to address these issues by offering guidance on how different types of tasks can be shifted across or shared appropriately by trained health-care providers. It shows how a greater range of health-care professionals can also be used including for example practitioners, nurses, midwives and auxiliaries.

Source: [World Health Organization](#)

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 - Novgorod 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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