



CEE Bulletin on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

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BURNING ISSUE

UN Human Rights Committee General comment No. 36 (2018) on article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on the right to life

This [document](#) contains 70 paragraphs on the meaning of the right to life, one of which is about access to abortion. Paragraph 8 calls for a right to safe abortion, and prohibits any restriction that might lead to an unsafe abortion or risk of death from unsafe abortion. It calls on states to reform their laws, and not to apply criminal sanctions against women and girls undergoing abortion or against medical service providers assisting them in doing so, since taking such measures compel women and girls to resort to unsafe abortion.

The first two paragraphs quoted below from the document define the right to life, followed by paragraph 8 on abortion, para 60 on children, and para 61 against discrimination.

Article 6 recognizes and protects the right to life of all human beings. It is the supreme right from which no derogation is permitted even in situations of armed conflict and other public emergencies which threatens the life of the nation. The right to life has crucial importance both for individuals and for society as a whole. It is most precious for its own sake as a right that inheres in every human

being, but it also constitutes a fundamental right whose effective protection is the prerequisite for the enjoyment of all other human rights and whose content can be informed by other human rights.

The right to life is a right which should not be interpreted narrowly. It concerns the entitlement of individuals to be free from acts and omissions that are intended or may be expected to cause their unnatural or premature death, as well as to enjoy a life with dignity. Article 6 guarantees this right for all human beings, without distinction of any kind, including for persons suspected or convicted of even the most serious crimes.

Although States parties may adopt measures designed to regulate voluntary terminations of pregnancy, such measures must not result in violation of the right to life of a pregnant woman or girl, or her other rights under the Covenant. Thus, restrictions on the ability of women or girls to seek abortion must not, inter alia, jeopardize their lives, subject them to physical or mental pain or suffering which violates article 7, discriminate against them or arbitrarily interfere with their privacy. States parties must provide safe, legal and effective access to abortion where the life and health of the pregnant woman or girl is at risk, and where carrying a pregnancy to term would cause the pregnant woman or girl substantial pain or suffering, most notably where the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest or is not viable. In addition, States parties may not regulate pregnancy or abortion in all other cases in a manner that runs contrary to their duty to ensure that women and girls do not have to undertake unsafe abortions, and they should revise their abortion laws accordingly. For example, they should not take measures such as criminalizing pregnancies by unmarried women or apply criminal sanctions against women and girls undergoing abortion or against medical service providers assisting them in doing so, since taking such measures compel women and girls to resort to unsafe abortion. States parties should not introduce new barriers and should remove existing barriers that deny effective access by women and girls to safe and legal abortion, including barriers caused as a result of the exercise of conscientious objection by individual medical providers. States parties should also effectively protect the lives of women and girls against the mental and physical health risks associated with unsafe abortions. In particular, they should ensure access for women and men, and, especially, girls and boys, to quality and evidence-based information and education about sexual and reproductive health and to a wide range of affordable contraceptive methods, and prevent the stigmatization of women and girls seeking abortion. States parties should ensure the availability of, and effective access to, quality prenatal and post-abortion health care for women and girls, in all circumstances, and on a confidential basis.

Full document can be accessed [here](#).

The Human Rights Committee is composed of 18 independent experts who are persons of high moral character and recognized competence in the field of human rights. Members are elected for a term of four years by States parties in accordance with articles 28 to 39 of the Covenant. Members serve in their personal capacity and may be re-elected if nominated.

Source: [International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion](#)

REGIONAL UPDATES

Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights: Romania should improve the protection of persons with disabilities and combat violence against women

“Romania needs to strengthen its institutional framework to better protect the rights of persons with disabilities, and should step up the efforts to combat violence against women,” said today Dunja Mijatović, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, at the end of her five-day visit to Romania. “While certain measures were taken to improve the legislative framework for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, serious shortcomings persist in respect of its implementation. Moreover, the current reform process which aims to decrease the number of institutionalised persons falls short of providing for the genuine structural changes needed to ensure their access to community-based services,” says the Commissioner.

Concerning the functioning of institutions, the Commissioner noted with concern that the present overlapping competencies given to different authorities and monitoring bodies involved in the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities not only weaken their mandates, but also affect the successful performance of their duties. “The responsible institutions should complete each other’s work, rather than compete with one another,” she says.

The Commissioner is equally concerned that the legislation still lacks important safeguards as regards involuntary institutionalisation. In addition, the Commissioner regrets that the announced reform concerning the legal representation of persons with disabilities has still not been completed. “I strongly encourage the authorities to bring this process to an end and urge them to ensure that measures taken in this area no longer involve the deprivation of persons with disabilities of their legal capacity.”

The Commissioner visited several residential institutions in Băbeni, where she noted with concern the difficult living conditions of adults with disabilities, including overcrowding, and the lack of services aimed at ensuring transition to independent life. “The authorities should focus on developing community-based services and prevent further institutionalisation”, she says. The Commissioner further noted that small institutions, such as the “Nicoleta” home for children in Băbeni, offer a better alternative to large residential institutions. “However, the authorities should strive to uphold the goal of providing care for children in a family environment.”

The Commissioner underscores the importance of Romania’s ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) in 2016 and urges the authorities to reinforce capacity-building measures to ensure that women’s complaints against violence are effectively investigated. “Officials at the highest political levels should send a strong message that gender-based discrimination is unacceptable. In addition, victim protection should be strengthened”.

In her meetings with the authorities the Commissioner also highlighted the importance of the participation of civil society in the protection of the rights of vulnerable people and urges them to enhance their cooperation with NGOs.

In the course of her visit, the Commissioner met with the Prime Minister of Romania, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Justice, and Labour and Social Justice, representatives of the Ministry of Health and

the First Deputy to the Prosecutor General, as well as representatives of the National Authorities for the Protection of the Rights of the Child and Adoption and for Persons with Disabilities and of the National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. She also met the Ombudsman, the Presidents of the National Council for Combating Discrimination and of the Council for the Monitoring of the implementation of the CRPD, local authorities and representatives of civil society.

The Commissioner's report on her visit to Romania is forthcoming.

Source: [Council of Europe](#)

Discrimination against women: UN experts visit Poland

The UN Working Group on discrimination against women in law and in practice will make their first official visit to Poland from 3 to 13 December 2018 to assess progress in eliminating discrimination and achieving gender equality.

"We are particularly interested in legislative and policy measures and their impact in practice on the realisation of human rights of women and girls in Poland," said Ivana Radačić, chairperson of the independent expert group of the United Nations Human Rights Council. The visiting delegation, which also includes Working Group expert Melissa Upreti, will hold meetings in Warsaw, Lodz, Gdansk, and Krakow.

"We will be looking at all aspects of women's life: political and public, economic and social, family and cultural life, and health and safety, including gender-based violence against women as a crosscutting issue. We are interested in achievements and good practices, as well as existing gaps and challenges," the experts said.

The experts, who were invited by the Government, will focus particularly on women who encounter multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and the situation of women human rights defenders. They will consult a range of stakeholders, including national and local government officials, representatives of state institutions and civil society organisations, and individuals.

The experts will present their preliminary observations at a news conference at 1:00 p.m. local time on Thursday, 13 December at the United Nations Information Centre, ul. Piękna 19, 00-549 in Warsaw. Access will be strictly limited to accredited media. The Working Group will submit a full report on the visit to the UN Human Rights Council in June 2019.

Source: [OHCHR](#)

EP Meeting on SRHR in the next multiannual financial framework

Co-chairs of [MEPs for SRR](#) Sophie in 't Veld and Heidi Hautala hosted a discussion at the European Parliament on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the next MFF on November 21st. Participants heard from a range of SRHR advocates: Aida Liha Matejicek from DG DEVCO, Aurore Guieu from IPPF European Network, and Steffi Neyens from DSW. The discussion delved into why the

EU must invest in sexual and reproductive health and rights in order to empower all, both socially and economically, including women, young people and LGBTQI people.

Joined by the European Board and College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (EBCOG), the issue of sexual and reproductive healthcare could be explored from both a public health and a human rights perspective; MEPs, women's health experts and advocacy specialists could come together on this pressing issue.

MEPs for Sexual and Reproductive Rights advocate for the support of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and the fight against HIV/AIDS, as the basis for sustainable social and human development and achieving gender equality as an integral part of human rights in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD, September 1994). The goals of the initiative are to:

- Provide a forum for dialogue and raising awareness of the need for an integrated approach to SRHR, the response to HIV/AIDS, gender equality and sustainable development.
- Monitor and increase resources from the EU for SRHR programmes in developing countries.
- Raise awareness at the EU and Member State level on the need to adopt SRHR policies, laws and programmes

Source: www.mepsforsrr.eu/node/71

“Act on Hope. How the European SRHR community can help unlock rights and care for all” – 2018 EuroNGOs Conference in Belgium

The 2018 EuroNGOs Conference titled “Act on Hope. How the European SRHR community can help unlock rights and care for all” took place in Gent (Belgium) on 6-7 November 2018. During this year's conference, the organisers decided to examine how reproductive and sexual justice is linked with understanding and overcoming other forms of structural oppressions that pose a threat to democracy as well as prevent the meaningful exercise of political, social, cultural and economic rights of women and marginalized groups, in particular. A two-day dialogue allowed participants to identify the ways in which the SRHR community can work together within human rights groups and other actors with linking interests such as LGBT, Disability or Migration movements as well as it will help set up a 2019 SRHR agenda for Europe in which the partnership, it's members and allies can implement and act on.

You can read more about the conference's theme and objectives [here](#) and the conference report is now available [here](#).

Source: <https://eurongos.events.idloom.com/2018conf>

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence underway in Moldova

The international campaign “16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence” started in Moldova and will continue until December 10, when the International Human Rights Day is celebrated. The goal of the event is to raise the population’s awareness of gender-based violence. The launch was held in Europe Square in the central park of Chisinau on November 25. The campaign was launched on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Its message this year is #HearMeToo End violence against Women and Girls.

“Only welfare can increase welfare. Any attempt to use violence in time gives birth to violence. What is the whole society turning into? I’m absolutely against violence. There are so many programs on TV that teach some to act this way. All the subjects seem to be aimed at correcting the behavior in society, but where there is even a small grain of violence, this grows and produces very serious tragedies. It is painful. Only kindness can stop the use violence, even by those who are aggressive. We can succeed only with determination and patience,” stated Missis Adriana aged 79.

In a press release, “Promo-LEX” Association said about 60% of the women in Moldova face psychological violence, while 55% - forms of psychological violence aimed at social isolation. Each tenth woman suffered economic violence at least once, about 40% of the women were subject to physical violence at least once and approximately 19% sexual violence at least once. At the same time, 12.3% of the women experienced the three cumulative forms of violence – psychological, physical and sexual – on the part of the husband or partner during their lifetime, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. In the first ten months of this year, the police recorded over 9,000 reports about use of violence and issued over 3,000 emergency restraining orders.

The campaign was launched as part of the project “Promoting the respect for women’s rights in Moldova by combating gender-based violence” that is implemented by “Promo-LEX”, “Casa Mărioare!” and “Memoria” and is supported financially by the European Union. The general objective of the project is to improve the observance of women’s rights by fighting gender-based violence.

Source: <http://www.ipn.md/en/arihiva/94969>

From ASTRA Members

ASTRA Solidarity statement with Bulgarian women

In response to a [call to action](#) started by Левфем (Informal group of Bulgarian left feminists) ASTRA, Central and Eastern European Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights issues a solidarity statement standing in solidarity with Bulgarian women. We are concerned with the developments in Bulgaria, the worsening status of women’s rights and the lack of commitment of the Bulgarian Government to human rights. We would also like to voice our grave concern with Bulgaria rejecting the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. This move is a sign of total disregard for the serious and systematic attacks on women.

Read the full statement [here](#).

Bringing WHO recommendations on safe abortion and family planning closer to women in countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia conference in Moldova

The regional conference „Bringing WHO recommendations on safe abortion and family planning closer to women in countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia” was held on November 15-16 in Chisinau, Moldova. A team of experts on reproductive health, decision making persons as well as those involved in preparation of guides and protocols, both in management of abortion and family planning from 12 countries participated.

During the conference a representative from each country from Eastern European And Central Asia presented the country situation on abortion and family planning. Participants shared positive examples and lessons learned.

Latest WHO Recommendations related to safe abortion and family planning were presented and discussed. As follow-up, Reproductive Health Training Center will be able to offer support to at least five countries to develop national guidelines/protocols on safe abortion, or for the revision of their current policies. The countries, which have policy documents on abortion, will be encouraged to review them and to update their system of data collection, to include data on quality of abortion.

“The purpose of the conference was to find out the latest WHO recommendations in the field of family planning and safe abortion. Another purpose of the event was to analyze the situation in how the Eastern European and Central Asian countries adhere to these recommendations, how we can improve their compliance and which method is more suitable. Another important goal was to discuss attempts of the anti-choice movement; how we monitor, what actions we take to stop such attempts. And we culminated this conference by proposing the launch of an alliance of EECA members to facilitate communication, exchange of experience and unification of efforts”, said Rodica Comendant, Director of RHTC.

For more information please see [here](#).

Source: <http://www.site.cidsr.md/en/conferinta>

16 days of Activism in Poland

Domestic violence remains one of the most serious human rights, gender-based problems in Poland. According to statistics, one in three women experiences violence in her life. Every year 150 are killed by their husbands or partners. 90% of victims are female, 90% of perpetrators are male. Therefore, annual campaign against violence and discrimination of women constitutes an important educational and awareness-raising tool aimed at combating violence and stereotypes surrounding it.

This year, the Federation for Women and Family Planning and the Great Coalition for Equality and Choice supported and participated in an unusual action organized by the Warsaw Women's Strike. It started on the 24th of November with a march through the centre and the presentation of gifts that were given by activists, celebrities and NGOs. The auction last until the 8th of December and the means gathered will be donated to women who experienced domestic violence. Organizers hope to

raise 100 000 PLN, which is a symbolic number given the 100th anniversary of Poland's independence and women's voting rights. Auction items can be found [here](#).

Source: [Federation for Women and Family Planning](#)

GLOBAL UPDATES

Inside Trump's Plan to Scale Back U.N. Resolutions on Sexual Health, Violence Against Women

The US State Department is directing American diplomats around the world to scale back U.S. support for a raft of overseas sexual and reproductive health programs that proponents see as vital to women's health, but conservatives believe promote abortion and sexual activity among young people. New State Department directives, outlined in internal memos show how the Trump administration is instructing U.S. diplomats at the United Nations to push back on U.N. resolutions on women's issues, outlining so-called red lines on language related to sexual health and sexual harassment.

The memos underscore the growing influence under President Donald Trump of Christian social conservatives, who have scored a series of successes in recent weeks, including the White House decision to consider [rolling back](#) rights for transgender Americans in federal civil rights law. Much of the administration's effort is focused on the U.N., where diplomats are discussing a raft of General Assembly resolutions on health, education, and social issues. In these discussions, U.S. diplomats have sought to strike references to the word "gender," as the Guardian [first reported](#) on Oct. 25.

The administration's positions have driven a wedge between the United States and its Western partners from Europe to Latin America, drawing it closer to more socially conservative countries, including Russia and Saudi Arabia. One of the memos obtained by FP says the United States can no longer use the phrases "sexual and reproductive health" or "comprehensive sexuality education," saying such terms promote abortions and normalize sexual activity for young people. The first phrase, "sexual and reproductive health," is broadly accepted in international forums and enshrined in U.N. resolutions and treaties involving international organizations. Usage of the second phrase, "comprehensive sexuality education," is still subject to debate at the United Nations.

It remains unclear whether the United States is willing to break consensus in the 193-member U.N. General Assembly if it fails to secure the changes it is seeking. In previous U.N. meetings, including a major conference in March on the Commission on the Status of Women, the United States ultimately backed down from some of its most hard-line positions.

Recently the United States backed down on demands to eliminate the phrase "sexual and reproductive health" from a final [document](#) at a Global Conference on Primary Health Care in Astana, Kazakhstan. But in exchange for joining the consensus, the United States insisted on including a footnote affirming that "in no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning." But the latest pushback has privately angered some U.S. diplomats, who worry that in the service of an anti-abortion agenda, the administration might hamper broader U.N. initiatives on global and women's health.

“This is not a symbolic gesture,” said Beirne Roose-Snyder, the director of public policy at the Center for Health and Gender Equity, an organization that advocates for sexual and reproductive health and rights in U.S. foreign policy. “It is a real harm to the health and rights of individuals, families, and communities and undermines the prevention and treatment of HIV as well as the avoidance of maternal deaths and unwanted pregnancies.”

A State Department spokesperson referred to the department’s policy of not commenting on allegedly leaked documents, and declined to comment on U.S. negotiating positions at the U.N., but said Washington was committed to protecting women and children and promoting global health issues. “The United States is and will remain a defender of women and children, and a global leader in funding for programs to improve the health, life, dignity, and well-being of women, their children and their families,” the spokesperson said.

The State Department, according to several officials, has yet to formulate a clear policy on some hot-button cultural and sexual issues, such as gender, leaving it to political appointees to promote policies favored by Christian conservatives outside of standard internal processes. “The traditional norms, procedures, and checks and balances that have been in place are being tossed aside,” said one State Department official. “Less than 10 people, all political appointees, call the shots.”

The rollback on U.N. resolutions has largely been driven by the White House Domestic Policy Council, as well as a small group of political appointees in the State Department, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Agency for International Development, which has been seeking a more influential role in U.N. debates on gender and sexual reproductive rights. Current and former officials say the broad influence of political appointees at USAID and Health and Human Services in diplomatic negotiations is a departure from previous practices.

Another directive, outlined in the draft memo that describes U.S. negotiating positions on a host of U.N. issues, states: “DOJ cannot support a resolution that conflates physical violence against women with sexual harassment.” The acronym is an apparent reference to the Department of Justice. “Not all forms of sexual harassment rise to the level of criminal offenses,” the memo says. The position undercuts decades of internationally accepted legal frameworks that define sexual harassment as a form of violence against women, according to diplomats and sexual health advocates. The draft memo recommends having the U.N. make distinctions between violence, abuse, and harassment. In a second draft memo viewed by FP on a U.N. resolution on family issues, U.S. diplomats were instructed to advance a proposal acknowledging that “marriage is the foundation of the family and society” and children benefit most in “families headed by a father and mother.” The benefits, according to the proposal, include lower poverty rates, lower obesity rates, and lower likelihood of violence and mental illness.

The State Department did not directly respond when asked what the basis was for saying these benefits could only come from children being raised by a “father and mother” as opposed to same-sex parents. Diplomats and sources familiar with internal U.N. deliberations say the United States withdrew the proposed language shortly after introducing it due to strong international pushback. But one diplomatic source told FP that some in Washington are still hoping to preserve that language.

Social conservative and anti-abortion advocacy groups, some of whom have long criticized U.N. stances on sexual and reproductive health issues, are likely to cheer the U.S. positions. Such groups have argued they will bring U.N. resolutions more in line with the Trump administration's anti-abortion policy. In May 2017, then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson rolled out a plan called "Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance" that formally instituted a Trump directive to cut U.S. assistance for foreign organizations that perform or educate people on abortions.

But Shannon Kowalski, the director of advocacy and policy at the International Women's Health Coalition, described the positions at the U.N. as "regressive." She called them "just another manifestation of a foreign policy that is already having devastating consequences on the lives of millions of women and girls worldwide."

Source: [Foreign Policy](#)

RESOURCES

New IPPF publication on medical abortion and women's lives: Her in charge

[Her in Charge report](#) presses governments, health, academic and NGO sectors to take immediate steps to stop women from dying and suffering disabilities due to an unsafe abortion by radically scaling up medical abortion efforts.

Nearly one in every two abortions that occur is unsafe – 25 million women each year are forced to find their own, often dangerous, solutions to an unintended pregnancy. The knowledge, the technology, and the experience to make all abortions safe exist. Yet tens of millions of women each year still lack access to completely safe abortions. Medical abortion – the use of the medicines misoprostol alone or in combination with mifepristone to opt out of a pregnancy – is safe, cheap and simple to administer.

IPPF's Her In Charge report demonstrates how medical abortion access can exponentially increase access to safe abortion, enabling women to be in charge about the decisions about their bodies. An essential part of women's rights. Medical abortion facilitates task-sharing, which is transformational in low-resource settings where primary-care level and lay workers are trained and equipped to administer abortion.

Key recommendations:

- Governments should create a supportive environment to ensure women can access safe and legal abortion, including the political, social, economic, health and legal frameworks.
- Medical abortion should be embedded in health systems. Governments can ensure the quality, availability and affordability of medical abortion drugs by registering misoprostol and mifepristone in the list of essential medicines of their countries.
- Women must be supported by health systems in accessing the information they need to have a medical abortion safely and to access post-abortion care. This includes medical abortion without medical supervision. Health systems should include self-administered medical

abortion. Women must have full information about medical abortion risks factors, dosage and have access to post-abortion care and contraception.

- Women must have all options available to them: either medical or surgical abortion, in a health facility or at home – whatever they prefer. It is their right.

Source: [IPPF](#)

All downhill from here. The rapid degradation of the rule of law in Poland: what it means for women's sexual and reproductive rights, and LGBT+ persons' rights

This report is the result of several months of desk-based research, combined with an international fact-finding mission conducted by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) in Poland, on LGBT+ persons and women's sexual and reproductive rights in the context of the degradation of the rule of law these past three years. FIDH was able to conduct approximately 20 interviews, all in Warsaw, of a wide range of actors: civil society organisations, members of the Polish government, members of the Parliament, the office of the Prosecutor, the office of the Polish Commissioner for Human Rights, associations of professionals – lawyers, doctors, teachers – and national experts.

The fact-finding mission took place from 19-24 June 2017 in Warsaw, Poland. It is based on:

- a series of discussions and interviews in Poland with a wide range of actors whose work was relevant to the subject of the mission – the consequences of the degradation of the rule of law for women's sexual and reproductive rights and LGBT+ persons' rights;
- desk-based research of FIDH Western Europe Desk; and
- discussions with members of the European Commission and the European Parliament, and the Polish Society of Anti-Discrimination Law.

The findings illustrate not only a clear lowering in the protection of the rights of LGBT+ persons and women's sexual and reproductive rights since 2015 when the Law and Justice Party (PiS) came into power following parliamentary elections, but also virulent attempts at backtracking on these rights. PiS started implementing its anti-democratic agenda in 2015 through its majority in the Sejm, profoundly undermining checks and balances, such as the independence of the judiciary or the space for civil society. This degradation of the rule of law, which has triggered strong reactions from international and European human rights bodies, has been accompanied by heightened powers awarded to the Catholic Church, and worrying attacks on the rights of LGBT+ persons and on women's sexual and reproductive rights, left with no voice or safeguard to protect them. The current government has remained deaf to any international or European calls to stop the democratic backsliding and afferent human rights abuses, to the point where there exists today a clear risk of a serious breach of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights in the country.

Over the past three years, new attempts at further restricting women's already very restrictive right to abortion, expanding the scope of the conscientious objection, and refusing to implement ECtHR rulings, have heightened to the point where it is currently almost impossible for women to undergo a legal and safe abortion in the country. The increasing influence of the Catholic Church in this area,

and the apparent willingness of the State to leave it under its control, through numerous anti-choice declarations and public support to stricter anti-abortion laws by officials, have been extremely damaging. During this period, the weight given to the Catholic Church has also induced heightened intolerance towards LGBT+ persons, as appears from the national equality body (the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Rights)'s refusal to deal with LGBT+ issues and favouring "family mainstreaming" instead, and from the numerous instances (e.g. in employment) where religion is invoked to justify discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression. This, combined with attempts by the current government to incapacitate the Polish Commissioner for Human Rights, the lack of public officials' reactions in the face of physical attacks against several organisations advocating for LGBT+ persons' rights, and the fact that Polish law almost does not prohibit discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression, entail LGBT+ persons' interests are not being safeguarded. Under this context, civil society organisations and opposition parties are even reluctant to introduce new laws which would expand the rights and protection afforded to LGBT+ persons, for fear this would backlash into further restrictions of these rights.

Based on these findings, this report formulates recommendations to the Polish government, and at the European level to the European Union, its member States and Members of the European Parliament; the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; European Commission; European Agency for Fundamental Rights; and Venice Commission of Democracy through Law of the Council of Europe; General Rapporteur on the rights of LGBTI people; and General Rapporteur on violence against women; and at the United Nations level to the UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

Source: [International Federation for Human Rights](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

UN Commission on the Status of Women 2019 deadlines

The 2019 CSW will take place from 11th to 22nd March 2019 with the priority theme of *Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls*. Full information about NGO participation can be found [here](#).

- CSW63 registration for NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) will be open online via the United Nations Indico registration system from 9 October 2018 to 27 January 2019.
- Sign up for NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC to express interest in delivering an oral statement during the general discussion will be open online from 24 January to 18 February 2019. The link to the sign-up form will be posted [here](#) on 24 January 2019.

- Sign up for NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC wishing to express interest in intervening from the floor during an interactive panel will be open online from 24 January until 18 February 2019. The link to the sign-up form will be posted [here](#) on 24 January 2019.

Commission on Population and Development fifty-second session

52nd session of the UN CPD will take place on April 1-5, 2019 in New York with the theme of *Review and appraisal of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

The appointed Chairperson is H.E. Mr. Courtenay Rattray, designate (Jamaica) - Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) and Vice-Chairpersons are as follows: Ms. Yuliana Angelova (Bulgaria) - Eastern-European Group; Mr. René Lauer (Luxembourg) - Western European and Others Group (WEOG); Mr. Saidu Nallo, designate (Sierra Leone) - African Group; TBD () - Asia-Pacific Group.

Information for NGOs is available [here](#).

Source: [UN](#)

ASTRA Network Members: Albania - Albanian Family Planning Association; Armenia - Society Without Violence; Armenia - Women's Resource Center; Armenia - Women's Rights 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.; Croatia – CESI; Croatia - Women's Room; Georgia – HERA XXI; Georgia – Real People, Real Vision; 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 – H.E.R.A.; Macedonia – Shelter Center; Moldova – Family Planning Association; Moldova - Reproductive Health Training Center; Poland - Federation for Women and Family Planning; Romania - A.L.E.G.; Romania - AnA: Society for Feminist Analysis; Romania - Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives; Romania - The East European Institute of Reproductive Health; 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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