



CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN WOMEN'S NETWORK FOR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

Warsaw/Brussels, 25 February 2010

Andris Piebalgs

European Commissioner for Development
Rue de la Science, 15
B-1049 Brussels - Belgium

Dear Commissioner,

On behalf of ASTRA regional network of NGOs I would like to congratulate you being approved by the European Parliament as a Member of the new European Commission. We know that your previous experience and competence will allow you to successfully head this important commissioner portfolio and the challenges it will involve. We are convinced that the new Commission is ready to successfully work in the coming years. We have no doubts that your experience will help in addressing global challenges by using the EU justice policy instruments.

With great interest we welcomed your statements and views on the development issues that you expressed during your hearing in the European Parliament. We definitely support your ideas that we as Europeans should take the lead to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by employing our European values; such as solidarity, democracy, the respect of fundamental human rights; the right to education, the right to health.

With this letter, ASTRA would also like to turn your attention to the fact that among the Millennium Development Goals that you addressed are also calls to "promote gender equality and empowerment of women" (MDG3). One of the most important elements of gender equality is the issue of sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR). You must be aware that not only in developing countries but also in a number of European Union countries, including the new Member States from Central and Eastern Europe, reproductive health remains to be inadequately addressed by state policies and relevant national laws.

ASTRA believes that as you stated during your hearing in the European Parliament your work will focus on the fact that the respect of fundamental human rights, and in particular the rights of women and children is an integral part of European development aid policy. We are looking forward to your support for this ambitious task!

We would be happy to provide you with any further information or material that would assist your work in the European Commission. We are looking forward to establish more direct contact with you to work together with us on a number of gender equality and other topics related to women in development. We would very much appreciate the possibility to meet you in a near future to share with you our common vision of what the European Union can do to promote gender equality and empowerment of women to reach the MDG.

On behalf of ASTRA network, I also encourage you to take into consideration and implement within the area of your work any relevant action that would result in strengthening women's role and rights in the society not currently covered by existing EU laws. We hope that during your term as the Commissioner you will ensure that women's issues remain one of the key objectives of the European Commission work programme for the coming years.

I am publishing this as an open letter on our website.

My best wishes for your new term in office.

Yours sincerely,



Wanda Nowicka
ASTRA Coordinator

ASTRA members:

Albania - Albanian Family Planning Association, Armenia - Women's Rights Centre, Azerbaijan - Centre "Women and Modern World", Belarus - Women's Independent Democratic Movement of Belarus, Bulgaria - Bulgarian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association, Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, Gender Education, Research and Technologies, Croatia - B.a.b.e. (Be Active, Be Emancipated), CESI - Centre for Education and Counselling of Woman, Women's Centre for Sexuality and the Prevention, Research, and Combating of Sexual Violence - Women's Room, Georgia - Women's Centre, Kazakhstan - The Legal Centre for Women's Initiatives "Sana Sezim", Lithuania - Family Planning and Sexual Health Association, Latvia - Latvia's Association for Family Planning And Sexual Health, Macedonia - Sheltar Centar, Moldova - Reproductive Health Service Centre, Poland Federation for Women and Family Planning, Romania - The East European Institute of Reproductive Health, AnA: Society for Feminist Analysis, Russia - Institute of State and Law, Russian Academy of Sciences, ANO "Women's Health", Novogorod Gender Centre, Slovakia - Pro – choice, Ukraine - Women Health and Family Planning, Charitable SALUS Foundation, ASTRA ASSOCIATE MEMBERS: Centre for Reproductive Rights, Ipas.

