

MISSION REPORT

Prepared for ASTRA

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EVENT: Thematic meeting “*Inequalities, Social Inclusion and Rights*”
ICPD Beyond 2014 in the UNECE region

ORGANISER: UNFPA and UNECE

DATES: 15-16 April 2013

PLACE: Belgrade, Republic of Serbia

15 April 2013

Opening remarks were presented by Mr. Werner Haug (Director, UNFPA EECARD), Meho Omerovic (Chairman, Commission for Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality in the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia), Ms. Vitalija Gaucaite Wittich (Chief, Population Unit, UNECE)

Session 1: Equality, equity, social inclusion, rights and advancement of ICPD agenda in the region

Presentations were made by Ms. Marta Diavolova (Programme adviser, UNFPA EECARD), Ms. Violeta Neubauer (Member of the CoE Gender Equality Commission and a CEDAW Committee member), Mr. Andrey Ivanov (Human Development Adviser, UNDP), Mr. Sandeep Prasad (Executive director of Action Canada for Population and Development and a member of the High Level Task Force for ICPD), Ms. Pinar Ilkcaracan (Women for Women’s Human Rights, Turkey and a member of the High Level Task Force for ICPD).

Ms. Wittich presented the advancement of ICPD agenda in the region pointing out that 45 out of 56 countries filled in a special questionnaire in that regard which will serve, in addition to reports from the three thematic meetings, as a basis for the preparation of the regional report which is to be presented during the UNECE Regional Conference “*Enabling choices: Population priorities for the 21st century*”, to be held in Geneva, 1-2 July 2013.

Mr. Ivanov referred to the 2011 UNDP Report on social inclusion and human development and focused its presentation on the statement that the national average income does not present the real picture of the situation in the different societies, especially when it comes to the issue of “inequality”.

Mr. Prasad presented the work of the High Level Task Force for ICPD which comprises of 26 experts and will perform its duty up to 2015. Some of the Guiding principles of the Task Force are: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) as Human Rights; Empowerment of women; Rights of adolescents; Accountability of the States. The Task Force will present its Position paper on 26.04.2013.

Ms. Ilkcaracan presented some of the main Recommendations of the Task Force, namely: respecting, protecting and fulfilling SRHR – education and legal policies; SRHR education – information and services; access to SRHR – education; eliminating Violence against Women (VAW). She pointed on the Outcome document of the last session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) because there were serious arguments about SRHR and sexuality education in particular. Lot of States did not agree to include SRHR issues in the agenda and the

Outcome document but, thanks to the UN Women intervention, the document was issued and some SRHR topics were included.

Session 2: "Successes and Challenges in Implementing the ICPR PoA as a Rights-Based Instrument for Addressing Inequalities and Enhancing Social Inclusion"

In the SRHR area, I presented the following **successes**: small decrease in maternal mortality, small increase in the use of contraceptives and decriminalization of homosexuality in most countries in the region; **and challenges**: division between the EU and non-EU countries within the CEE region; inequalities existent within the countries; extremely high numbers of abortions, accompanied by lack of sexuality education in schools (high numbers of teenage pregnancies); difficult access to contraception (expensive contraception often available only in bigger cities); difficult access to abortion; old abortion methods (unsatisfying sanitary conditions, hence many illegal and unsafe abortions performed outside the big cities); no pharmaceutical abortion available in lots of the CEE countries; lack of reliable statistical data on abortion and contraception use; neglect towards the SRHR issues in the CEE region (no consistent policies and commitments); worrying developments combining demography with abortion and contraception issues; rise of fundamentalism. Reference was made to the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).

In addition to that, when it comes to the SRHR, the following questions were extensively discussed during the thematic meeting and will be included as recommendations in the UN report: SRHR should be recognised as human rights even in times of crisis; there should be human rights approach to health, including SRHR; access to abortion; access to contraception; access to hormon therapy; access to reproductive technologies; the issue of conscientious objection; comprehensive sexuality education; age of consent and parental consent; elderly people SRHR; disabled women SRHR; migrant women SRHR; LGBT people SRHR.

During the second session the following questions were also discussed: indicators for measuring inequalities; capability approach; qualitative data; poverty; role of the Media (Conference on gender equality and Media will be organized by the CoE in July 2013); human rights approach to health.

Session 3: "Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women"

The following issues were discussed: equal pay for equal work or work of equal value; unpaid care work; flexible working hours; combination of private and professional life; education courses after maternity leave; kindergardens; gender quotas; role models; portrayal of women by the Media.

I presented the issue of VAW and the need Convention 210 of the CoE to be ratified and implemented, thus ensuring effective State protection for the victims of gender-based violence through: legislation; services; funding; accountability; monitoring. The case-law of the ECtHR was presented as such creating standards for the implementation of the States positive obligations in the area of gender-based violence. Reference was made to the CEDAW Committee jurisprudence.

In addition, the following topics were discussed: the issue of sex work (decriminalization was at consensus); participatory approach; family issues (fatherhood; alemonies); LGBT issues.

16 April 2013

Session 4: "Inequalities and Vulnerable Groups"

The following groups were put for discussion: youth; aged; disabled; women (already discussed); migrants.

The problem areas discussed included: violence against children; forced marriages; involvement of youth in a decision-making process related to their rights and interests; LGBT youth issues, including homelessness; youth living in remote places and small villages; youth in orphanages; youth sex education; peer education; human rights education in schools; use of social Media; loneliness (people with lack of social support networks, especially in the cities); age discrimination; long-term unemployment; old people living in remote and rural areas; care for elderly to be taken by both sexes; care by the elderly to be recognized (globalization; migration); elderly as mentors rather than needing support; work in the communities; euthanasia; mental illnesses and institutionalization (I presented the case of *Stanev vs. Bulgaria*); ethnic minorities; abuse against old people; multiculturalism; education on disability; infrastructure; employment for disabled people; health access; women giving birth to disabled children and being left by their husbands/partners; village migrants; HIV status; migrant centres. Migrant issues were mostly discussed during the first Thematic meeting.

The outcome document from the thematic meeting will be prepared in May 2013 and added to the Regional report which is to be presented during the UNECE Regional Conference “Enabling choices: Population priorities for the 21st century” to be held in Geneva, 1-2 July 2013.

During the Regional Conference, time spot is planned for presenting the outcome documents of the three thematic meetings: successes, challenges, emerging issues and recommendations for the future.

On 22.04.2013, I was invited by the UNFPA and UNECE to be the discussant for the outcome document of the second thematic meeting and to present it during the Regional Conference.

22.04.2013
Plovdiv, Bulgaria

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