

58th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls in Central and Eastern Europe

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver this statement on behalf of Federation for Women and Family Planning, Poland, Society Without Violence, Armenia, and ASTRA, Central and Eastern European Network of women's rights NGOs advocating for sexual and reproductive health and rights and promoting gender equality.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) framework was an important contribution to the promotion of women's human rights in the region. Some regional highlights refer to the reduced maternal mortalities, introduction of national sexual and reproductive health policies, established family planning and sexual and reproductive health clinics, the Istanbul Convention's ratification and signature by several countries across the region.

However, while substantial progress has been made, the MDG framework leaves behind a lot of unfinished tasks in Central and Eastern Europe.

Substantial growth of religious and conservative groups troubles the region and poses a major challenge to the realization of women's rights. Women's autonomy and women's right to control their own sexuality and fertility is much impeded by laws or cultural norms and traditions that bar women's access to quality sexual and reproductive health services.

Some governments in the region still oppose the access to legal and safe abortion or modern contraceptives. Comprehensive sexuality education is still hardly anywhere introduced in formal settings limiting thus access to unbiased and trusted information.

Gender based violence is still widely spread in the region, the survivors of violence lack access to critical services, information and gender education. Many women are dying because of the absence of policies, laws and political will to put in place appropriate mechanisms to end violence against women. This is a critical issue where the international community needs to react immediately.

Taking into account the specific needs of our region, ASTRA Network urges to take forward the following actions:

- Ensure that sexual and reproductive health and rights are positioned at the heart of Sustainable Development Goals and post-2015 framework as critical area for achieving gender equality;
- Ensure quality, integrated, comprehensive sexuality education in schools;
- Ensure access to safe and legal abortion and access to affordable methods of modern contraception and remove all legal and structural barriers to universal access to safe abortion;
- Take appropriate steps to eradicate all forms of gender based violence;
- Recognize the sexual and reproductive rights of people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

These are fundamental priorities for any human rights-based and people-centered agenda. Thus, I respectfully request that this statement and its main contents coming from the hearts of thousands of women and girls living in Central and Eastern Europe be reflected in the final reports of the 58th session of the CSW.