

THE WATCHDOG

Jaw-Dropping 45 Minutes

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Agenda

Monday

- 10-11.30am: Feminism and the Third Wave: Young Women's Perspective on Feminism - US Customs House
- 11.30-1.30pm: Beijing+5 Host Committee Opening Ceremony for NGOs- Dag Hammarskjold Plaza.
- 1-2.30pm: Briefing on Global Challenges to Reproductive Rights and Equality - US Customs House
- 3-6pm: The Impact of Microcredit of the World's Poorest Women - UN Conf. Room 3
- 6-8pm: Reproductive Rights 2000: Moving forward Launch and Reception - Beekman Tower Hotel

Jaws dropped in the peanut gallery on Saturday at the unbelievably smooth sailing of the outcome of the trafficking group in the working session

Co-chair Misako reported on the proceedings of the hours and hours of toil that the contact group put in (especially Philippines). And the goodwill and consensus of the participants of the contact group. Five paragraphs in 45 minutes. That has to be a record of sorts.

The main objection was by Pakistan on 131(a) on states of origin, transit and destination with reference to the ongoing negotiations on the draft protocol of the UN Convention on Transnational Organised Crime. Philippines, however, dug in its heels on specific reference to the states origin, transit and destination. The reworded paragraph has been split and reads as follows:

131(a) Intensify cooperation between states of origin, transit and destination to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

131(b) Support the ongoing negotiations on the draft protocol to prevent, suppress and punish traf-

ficking in persons, especially women and children, which supplements the UN Convention on Transnational Organised Crime.

The paragraph 104(a) has been bracketed and moved to the main document.

The speed-passage on the trafficking language may not be an indicator of things to come. The pace of the working group can still be compared to the snail family. Reconvening of the sessions are as late as 45 minutes to even an hour.

Moreover, after clearing of problematic, drawn-out sections the organisers are

more often than not caught non-plussed. And when they return this is an example of some of the exchanges on the working group floor: "My dear brother", "appeal to your flexibility" and the atypical "beg your indulgence". The pleading is hitting a desperate note.

The latest on the Contact Group on Health. Since its scope extends to globalisation, family, human rights and the girl child, health has been put on the backburner.

The discussions are currently on globalisation.

By Sonu Chhina

Insane Sanitario Decision

Far be it for us to use every piece of Watchdog space to discuss Gender issues, discrimination or the UN system. However the Watchdog received a request from several people to address a specific issue. An issue that affects all of us participating in the Beijing+5 process. An issue that has people feeling everything from puzzlement to outrage. What is that issue? The women's bathroom near the Vienna Café. Is it just me, or does it strike us all as a little strange that someone in the megalithic UN bureaucracy authorized the refurbishment of the women's bathroom exactly at the same time they were expecting 2000 NGO participants (mostly women) to show up to a meeting? Not to mention the number of government female delegates here this week! Was it bureaucratic oversight, or a deliberate mechanism to disempower us, diverting our attentions from the negotiations as we madly search for suitable facilities to address one of our most basic of human needs?

By Erin McGinn

Under the Global Gag Rule, providers who see first-hand the harm that illegal abortions do to women, can do nothing to advocate for life-saving changes to their own country's abortion laws.

By contrast, in the United States, it was the ability of providers and advocates to speak freely and openly about the harmful effects of our own country's abortion laws that lead to the legalization of abortion and, in turn, a dramatic decrease in deaths and harm due to unsafe, illegal abortion.

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Attention US Congress: Rights Have no Borders

Global Gag Rule harms developing nations

In November 1999, President Clinton signed a bill that made it legal to stifle the voices of family planning providers – an act that you would think would violate the U.S. Bill of Rights. But there is no lawsuit pending, no widespread protest of this constitutional violation. Why? Because the people and organizations which are harmed are from developing countries.

In order to approve payment of America's long overdue debt to the United Nations, President Clinton was forced to accept the Global Gag Rule. The Gag Rule is an anti-family planning measure that restricts what foreign family planning providers can do and say. This rule prohibits foreign organizations that receive U.S. family planning assistance from providing abortions with their own money - even in countries where it is legal. It also prohibits these organizations from communicating with their governments about change in

the abortion policy of their country. In fact, even an article like this one could be construed as violating the Gag Rule.

In countries around the world, unsafe abortion is a major public health hazard. Nearly 80,000 women die every year from unsafe abortion, making up 13 per cent of the 600,000 maternal deaths worldwide. In Latin America, this figure rises to 21 per cent of all maternal deaths. Most of these deaths could have been prevented with access to family planning services. Helping families meet their contraceptive needs helps them avoid unintended pregnancies that result in abortion.

By denying funds for local family planning providers, the Global Gag Rule would disproportionately harm poor women – for whom family planning services are out of reach without publicly supported programs.

In many cases, these organizations provide a variety of health services

and are best equipped to meet the needs of their local community. But the Global Gag Rule makes health care a privilege of the wealthy and makes women's private decisions about childbearing subject to the political and public domain.

As part of the deal he made with Congress, President Clinton was able to waive the restrictions of the Global Gag Rule for this year. However, if the law remains under a different administration, the president could elect not to waive the Gag Rule, and cause those foreign organizations with the most experience delivering reproductive health care services to lose their U.S. funding.

We cannot allow the U.S. Congress to say that the right to free speech and access to life-saving health care ends at our border. Rights have no borders.

By Rachel Russell

There's Life Outside the UN!

Monday, June 5

American Ballet Theatre. Metropolitan Opera House, Columbus Ave at 64th. 8pm. \$17 - \$75. Program: Le Corsaire (Dvorovenko, Belotserkovsky, Murphy, Gomes and Radetsky). Bryan Hayes & Carolyn Lord.

Lincoln Sports Challenge. World Financial Center, West St. Between Vesey and Liberty. Free admission, \$3 per event, \$10 day pass. Through Jun 9. Test your skills at baseball, basketball, football, golf, rowing and tennis at this sports festival.

The right to choose is the right to life



You are bound to have seen the yellow T-shirts. During the PrepCom in

March, youth in support of the Beijing PFA organized themselves under the name of Youth for Women's Rights. The young people in this group come from more than 60 different countries. It is an initiative of the Youth Coalition for ICPD, the Latin American and Caribbean Youth Network on Sexual and

Reproductive Rights, the Network of Asia Pacific Youth (NAPY), the African Youth Network and the CSW Youth Caucus in support of the BPfA. The Y4WR have already produced new language for the Contact Group on Health and organized the closing ceremony for Saturday's NGO Working Session. Be prepared for more!

"AskScot"

What does the word feminism mean to you?

Me, being American, the feminists I've seen here have been more of an extreme. It seems they have a lot of anxiety or dislike... it's kind of scary. It's not something I've really studied or looked into because it frightens me. I've only seen debates on CNN, they [feminists] seem angry. I'm sure that's not what it's all about, because you know in America, we go overboard on everything. If the intent to be a feminist means to have equality and human rights, then that's a great thing. If it means to make me an eunuch... then that scares me.

So, the women of your age group, they don't call themselves feminists?

There was this one friend I had, who called herself a feminist, but to me, she was more like one of the guys. Every time I see a woman who says she's a feminist, they're old. I don't see any young women who say they are [feminists]. It seems like it was something belonging

to a certain time period.

I'm going to ask you a sensitive question now...what do you think about abortion?

I knew that would come up. It's a woman carrying a child, not a man. I'm sensitive to that. But if it comes down to [a decision] between a woman and a child, I would have to support the child...[given that there are many people wanting to adopt] it's not like it couldn't find a home. I just think [that] everything is for a reason, even if we can't understand it. Maybe I'm only saying this because I'm a man and because I really love kids. I can't tell you how much I love kids.

What about in cases of rape, incest or to safeguard the health of the mother?

As a man, I don't think I can answer that. I can't imagine how horrible it would be to be raped. I don't even know how I can answer that question. [In the case of the health of the mother and child] if both lives are in danger, it

would be unintelligent for both to die.

So do you think we should have laws against abortion?

I wouldn't physically stop a woman from having an abortion. If a person has made up his/her mind to do something, how can you tell a person they can't? What are you going to say—"No, it's illegal"? How can anyone say that? People always want to baby-sit or control other people. But it would bother me if my girlfriend/wife had an abortion without telling me. Because I like kids so much, I would just like to find another solution other than abortion. The Law should know that it's [women seeking abortions] is going to happen anyway. If women were in a better position [to make laws] then that would be different.

Scot is 30 (the toughest birthday he ever had), single and a Pisces. He says he's extremely romantic, but that New York women never talk to him. People physically compare him a lot to the actor George Clooney.

Errata: In the Saturday issue, Scot's comment, "This falls in with our conversation yesterday, about tradition.

Catholicism is a religion, but it's also a tradition. If the information is available to people...do they not trust you to have the capacity to make a decision on what is right for you? And this isn't just [a problem] with Catholicism, this falls under many religions", was inadvertently attributed as the interviewer's query. The error is regretted.

NAPY's formation is very timely in light of the ongoing Beijing+5 review process. Before, the voices youth were limited to any grabbed opportunity. The coming together of young people in one regional network certainly promises expression of voices in a more organized rhythm. NAPY was born by the same spirit underlying every genuine initiative towards women's empowerment. It assumes the task of nurturing such spirit even after Beijing. NAPY takes part in Youth for Women's Rights in this Beijing+5 process.

...and NAPY Was Born

The Network of Asia Pacific Youth started with young women taking control of the microphones and overtaking the podium to claim space and make their voices heard. This happened at a gathering of Asian Pacific women where the alternative Youth Forum was organized separately and inadequately. Young women from Afghanistan, Fiji, India, Malaysia, Philippines, South Korea and Vietnam expressed powerfully at this gathering how they were being marginalized because the youth were excluded from participating in discussions on more substantial issues which constituted the gathering.

The seeds of the youth network started to gain formal grounds at an advocacy training workshop on sexual and reproductive rights, organized by the Youth Coalition for ICPD in

February 2000 in Bangkok, Thailand.

All 27 participants from 15 countries in the Asia Pacific region namely Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam have become NAPY's founding members. Recognizing the need for a regional mechanism that will advance the concerns of the youth of the region, NAPY members agreed to carry out a broader coverage of youth issues in the area of health and rights. The issue of reproductive and sexual health and rights will be among its priority concerns for advocacy.

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Meeting at the Bangkok Workshop

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By Lalaine Viado



New Argentinean Network

In May 1999, 115 young people from all over Argentina got together for the 1st meeting of the National Network of Adolescents on Sexual and Reproductive Health.

This network was created last year by the initiative of FEIM (Foundation for Studies and Research on Women) and a group of adolescents trained as peer educators on sexuality, STIs/HIV/AIDS and adolescent pregnancy prevention. The goal of the network is to develop permanent joint work and

training on these topics, to promote adolescents' activities on the defense and advocacy of their sexual and reproductive rights, and to build citizenship skills through the monitoring of the implementation of the ICPD PoA and Beijing Pfa.

All these young people work with groups or NGOs on issues of STIs and HIV/AIDS, as well as with the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights.

The main objectives of the meeting were to inte-

grate all the members of the network and discuss the Declaration of Purposes and the Action Plan for the current year. The meeting fulfilled the initial expectations and it was a great step for a national network that is growing day by day, demonstrating that young people are mobilizing for their rights.

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By Maria Eugenia

Media and youth. Friends?

Youth participation is a very important issue that has come up in various discussions during this Beijing+5 process. The media can play an important role in increasing youth participation. The different forms of media can reach out to whole communities and show good examples of youth participation.

Media can also be used by the youth groups and organizations in their workshops, out-reach activities or school activities to address their public. This media material, whether it's printed, filmed, taped or online, must be developed in a way that young people from all ages and backgrounds can identify themselves. Only when they see themselves in the material will they start to reflect on their own situation and behavior.

On Sunday, June 4, there was a symposium on Girls as Their Own Advo-

cates organized by UNICEF. In the afternoon, the role of the media in influencing and limiting girls' choices was discussed by a panel of two girl advocates and a film producer. Both girls highlighted that media plays an important role in forming and changing peoples values and attitudes. Romylyn Bernal Alejado from the Philippines stressed that child friendly media is needed. The Watchdog would like to add that youth friendly media is required by youths. Bridget Tlapu from South Africa, gave examples in her speech of how the media paints pictures of how boys and girls are supposed to behave. Boys are generally seen playing with cars, while girls always carry dolls around on television. If mass media would stop stigmatizing people and start a discus-

sion on principles and beliefs we would be making a big step toward a equal and non-discriminatory society. The Danish film producer, Frode Hojer Pedersen, showed some clips on the lives of teenage prostitutes in Bangladesh, street children in Brazil and teenage carpet manufacturers in Nepal to emphasize how media can be used to show real lives of girls and young women and influence people's thoughts. Media is definitely important to raise attention and mobilize resources to relevant questions.



Be Prepared for No Thank You

Two members of the Youth for Women's Rights took part in the intergenerational panel discussion at the NGO working-session last Saturday. Selma Gasi from Bosnia-Herzegovina stressed that older generations should believe in youth and invest some time in them. "We ask only five minutes of your time, but for us these five minutes are an opportunity to learn." Julia Velazquez from Mexico demanded spaces for young people in all their diversity. "Age is often a source of conflict, to recognize this is perhaps the first step forward."

For the young people it

was surprising to find out that the "middle generation is suffering even more". Apparently everybody is fighting for space. Mona Zulficar from Egypt concluded: "We should be listening more to each other instead of only to ourselves."

Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi from Nigeria enthralled the audience with a poem that she had penned in which she thanked the older women for their work and warned the younger generations to be prepared for no thank you!

The chair linked to whole discussion to the Beijing+5 conference and came right out by saying: "Governments

should put money where their words are." Many of these words have unfortunately already been taken out of the document in last week's negotiations or were weakened by "where appropriate", "considers", and "as soon as possible" instead of "in five years".

Regarding the promising words on the relationship between the old and young: We encourage all NGOs to consider developing and implementing strategies to get more young people involved in their own organisations at all levels of policy-making as soon as possible.
By Nadia van der Linde and Rose Koenders

F.A.K.E.
WOMEN

Feminists Alive and
Kicking for Equality

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The Youth Coalition for ICPD is an organization composed of committed youth working at the local, national, and international levels to promote the full implementation of the Programme of Action stemming from the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo. The Youth Coalition emerged from the ICDP+5 Youth Forum, held in the Hague, in February 1999.

Through public education, advocacy, and coalition building, the Youth Coalition strives to ensure that the sexual and reproductive health rights, needs, and concerns of young people are addressed fully, and that young people from around the world are actively and meaningfully involved in all aspects of development, especially sexual and reproductive health, rights, and education issues. Its members, which range between the ages of 15 and 29, come from diverse backgrounds and represent every region in the world.

How the Caribbean Youth Did It

The Caribbean Youth Summit 1998 was historic. It was the first time in the Caribbean that young people were called together with the policy-makers, health-care practitioners and parents in order to take a step forward to deal with the problems of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The policies and programmes were less effective because they didn't involve youth. Now, however, progress is being made with the clients - the young people - at the forefront. Having gotten the adults to sit down and listen to the youth, the next step

has been made to make sure that the promises are kept and the commitments maintained. There is a major step that could make things significantly better for the lives of many young people.

Now, youth representatives from the Caribbean are coming together to set up a regional advocacy unit at the policy level. This would be an official alliance with the Caribbean Parliamentary Movement on Population and Development that is to be launched later this year. The Parliamentarians have already: "acknowledged the need for their [the youths] full participation in the mak-

ing and implementation of all policy decision" in their Declaration of Intent. They have also committed themselves to implement the Regional Action Plan of the Caribbean Youth Summit. This commits them to form formal alliances. When implemented, this Action Plan will facilitate youth participation at the highest level, which will have a positive impact on the protection of adolescent sexual and reproductive rights through more effective legislation.

By Dennis Brooks

Colofon

Lalaine Viado (NAPY), Nadia van der Linde, Erin McGinn, Sonu Chhina, Rose Koenders, Marianna Nasser, Maria Eugenia, Dennis Brooks. And Scot

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