

# THE WATCHDOG

## Status of Negotiation on Sexual Orientation in the Contact Group

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### Agenda

#### Thursday

- 10-12pm CRLP, 'The future of reproductive rights: trends in law and policy', US Custom House
- 1pm Time is Running Out! Enough is Enough! Raise your voices for women's rights - Women's Gathering - Ralph Bunche Park, 42nd and 1st
- 1-4pm No limits for women, 'Young Women', see website
- 1.15-2.45pm Youth Caucus, 'Foreign Policy & development and the World Bank
- 3-4pm Panel NAPPY, 'Me and my Own body', Ballroom UN Plaza, 44th street and 1st avenue

Wednesday's discussion began (and ended) with EU's paragraph 44bis which had the term "diversity" and a listing that included "sexual orientation". Also in debate was the placement of the paragraph, some countries suggesting it be moved to section I and not IV. Although there was little agreement, the three differing positions on its substantive contents were:

1. to employ PFA language - maintaining the phrase "diversity of women" without a listing and in some instances, allowing a reference to "discrimination on any ground" (Chile, Cuba, Bangladesh, Syria, Holy See, Egypt, Namibia, Kenya and China). Iran alone objected to the term "diversity", which they cited as new and
2. Brazil, speaking not as a member of SLAC, favoured the listing with the exception of "sexual orientation" and with the addition of "discrimination on any ground". Similarly, Nigeria could accept the entire listing with the exception of sexual orientation and suggested a substitute, "sexual socialization process" (!) It was suggested that sexual orientation needed further clarification since some feared that it would include pedophilia, necrophilia and bestiality.
3. JUSCANZ came out strongly, insisting on the inclusion of both the listing and the inclusion of sexual orientation, citing the need to move forward, beyond Platform language.

vague wording.

It was agreed to address the issue in a smaller group but to date, little agreement has been reached.

In the interim, EU and JUSCANZ agreed to the deletion of paragraph 102j (which makes explicit reference to lesbians) in light of ongoing negotiations on diversity and sexual orientation in the other paragraphs. When pushed again to delete the listing in paragraph 103b, Liechtenstein warned delegates that although the content and placement of the listing were negotiable, they would appear in some form under the sections on discrimination and violence.

There remains 5 paragraphs on diversity, as well as 48bis. If little agreement has been reached when the Contact Group reconvenes (Thursday 10am conference room 5), diversity will be left until the end as a way of facilitating consensus on other issues.

## Press Conference

### Me and My OWN Body:

Young Women of Asia Pacific Talk about Control of their Own Bodies

Network of Asia Pacific Youth (NAPPY)

8 June 2000, 3-4 pm  
Ballroom, UN Plaza Hotel  
44th Street and 1st Avenue

By A Concerned Youth Delegate

# Sexual Diversity is Not a Curse

*Phumi Mtetwa from South Africa warned everyone that "Difference is not a curse". Many changes have been made in laws regarding discrimination in South Africa since the fall of the apartheid regime. The legal framework is providing a basis for the protection against discrimination on the grounds of, among others, sexual orientation. However, a tolerant environment must still be created since equality can not be reached on paper alone.*

I support...  
**ICPD  
CHOICE  
YOUTH**

Sexual and reproductive rights are said to be the most human of all rights, according to Irene Leon from Ecuador in yesterday's panel on Sexuality and Human Rights. At the same time, sexual orientation is one of the most discussed and most difficult issues during this Beijing+5 process.

As the representative from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights explained, sexual orientation is not a new concept. It was also adopted in the ECE document last February as: "review and repeal laws that criminalize homosexuality, since such laws contribute to creating a climate which encourages violence against women who are, or are perceived to be, lesbians". There were no reservations on this paragraph, not even by the Vatican.

According to Sunila Abeysekera from Sri Lanka, sexual orientation is still a difficult concept to talk about even within the Women's Movement. When talking

about women's advancement it concerns the full respect for their integrity and their human rights. "Within the Movement we fight for all women and we can not accept any discrimination." There is still too much fear for female sexuality: you are not seen as normal if you are not married and do not have children. Women should have the right to make their own choices regarding their sexuality. "As long as this is denied, it is a denial of women's integrity and identity."

Phumi Mtetwa from South Africa warned everyone that "Difference is not a curse". Many changes have been made in laws regarding discrimination in South Africa since the fall of the apartheid regime. The legal framework is providing a basis for the protection against discrimination on the grounds of, among others, sexual orientation. However, a tolerant environment must still be created since equality can not be reached on paper alone.

At the same time, there are still a couple of thousand people around the UN building trying to do just that: work on the paper or document. Vienna Café rumours last night told us paragraph 102 j had been deleted, but according to the Watchdog's latest information it is still in brackets. It goes as follows (according to the outcome document of June 4): "Take action to end discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation; review and repeal laws that criminalize homosexuality, since such laws contribute to creating a climate which encourages discrimination and violence against women who are, or are perceived to be, lesbians; and address violence and harassment against them". The Youth Coalition for ICPD supports the members of the panel in their fight and urges all governments to adopt this paragraph during the last negotiations today.

**By Rose Koenders & Nadia van der Linde**

## There's Life Outside the UN!

**Thursday, June 8**

Life is a Dream: The first English translation of Spanish dramatist Calderon de la Barca's 1677 liturgical drama, Life is a Dream. Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave at 112th St (212-252-3307). Subway 1, 9 to 110th. 7.30pm. \$15. Through June 10

At the Cadman Plaza, Court and Montague streets you can enjoy the United Brooklyn Day Fair, from 11 am till 6 pm. Take the subway M, N or R to Court street.

No we are not talking dirty here, we are talking art. Paintings, sculptures, drawings and photos are being sold at the 'Take home a nude' auction. Cocktails and fancy hors d'oeuvres are included in the rather pricey entrance fee of \$200. NY Academy of art, 111 Franklin street.

Tonight the last performance of this week by Rosemary Clooney, the mother of, at Fernstein's at the Regency at 8.30.

At 8 pm the drama 'The Countess' will start in Lambs Theatre on 130 W 44th street, between Broadway and 6th. It's the true story of a Victorian scandal involving a painter, an art critic and his alluring wife, and one very big secret.

# Fighting HIV/AIDS with Information

Young people are facing the AIDS pandemic and have to develop ways to fight against it. A big challenge is destroying all the barriers that we have created with wrong information and moral and religious beliefs that permits and promotes discrimina-

tion against people with HIV/AIDS.

In 1998, of the 30 million people living with HIV, at least one third were aged 10 to 24. Each year there are about 2.6 million new HIV infections in this age group.

Young people should receive the information, education and services necessary to avoid becoming part of these statistics. To realize this, big changes in culture in many parts of the world are needed. Youth have to be accepted

*(Continued on page 4)*

**Why do you think young people (15-24) are 50% of all new infections?**

*I don't know. Maybe they are not as mature to consider the consequences of what they are doing, so they don't use protection. Also, they are at that age that they are exploring their sexuality. They also have that mentality 'it can't happen to me'.*

*For those of you not here last week to read the first Watchdog...we thought that it might be nice to bring the Beijing+5 process to the street to find someone who could give a little insight on what the average person thinks about our issues. That's what 'AskScot' has been all about. Scot is a waiter at a local restaurant. While we might not agree with everything he has said, he has been extremely accommodating by letting us interview him for the past week. Thanks Scot!*

**Let's talk about HIV/AIDS.**

It's the single most devastating disease we've encountered as a human race. Not only because of death, but because it changes us socially. It has changed how we deal with each other, our sexual behaviour; it has even been used as a weapon to discriminate against gays [homosexuals]. It has changed the whole world. It seems so strange to hear that if you have sex, you can die.

**Why do you think young people (15-24) are 50% of all new infections?**

## "AskScot"

I don't know. Maybe they are not as mature to consider the consequences of what they are doing, so they don't use protection. Also, they are at that age that they are exploring their sexuality. They also have that mentality 'it can't happen to me'.

**Why do you think women are more vulnerable?**

Men are having a lot of sex. Men are getting it [HIV] from multiple partners and one man can infect a lot of women.

**What do you think we should be doing?**

Finding a cure. As much

as has been done [to raise awareness], all the celebrities talking about it, etc., if it's increasing, I don't know what else can be done other than find a cure. You can always design a campaign to try to inform [people] better.

*He doesn't like watching sports, but has played them a lot. He always leaves a big tip to waiters (as an act of solidarity). He would have liked being a Roman Gladiator in a previous life. He considers himself very in tune with his sensitive side.*



*Late shift at the Watchdog--from left to right--Marianna Nasser, Scot, and Liam Swiss. See, we told you Scot was real!*

# Sex Education as Tool and Goal

In Sweden sex education has been mandatory since 1955. It is supposed to be part of the curriculum throughout all levels of schooling; of course it is adjusted to the age of the pupils. This has broken down the taboos surrounding sexuality. Today grandparents have had sex education and young people get answers to the questions they ask about growing up, bodies, feelings and sexuality.

What is heard among some Swedish pupils is that the sex education sometimes should focus

less on the reproduction and anatomy and more on the sexuality. Good sex education is when you discuss issues like growing up, values, homosexuality, feelings and all the other things that concern you when you are at this age. This leads to better self esteem and assertiveness and enables them to stand up for themselves and to say yes or no to sex.

Sweden has had sex education for 50 years and the results of this are: that first intercourse occurs around 16-17 years old, that young people

are very good when it comes to using contraceptives (even during the sexual debut), have one partner at the time, never die due to abortions and that there are few teenage abortions in Sweden. Fredrik Lindahl is a member of The Swedish Association for Sex Education

By Fredrik Lindahl



## ...Fighting HIV/AIDS

*(Continued from page 3)*  
as sexual beings with their own choice of having a sexual active life.

Ignorance and existing morals in certain countries prevent young women from exercising their basic sexual right to choose when, where, with whom and how they have sexual relations. This forces them to hide their active sexual life and feel ashamed to go to health care services, or to buy condoms.

Everyone should open their eyes and see what is happening to us. Cultural taboos are not responding to our reality: young people are dying. It is obligatory for the governments to guarantee the promotion and the full respect of young people's sexual and reproductive rights. Youth

have to be able to make their own choices and need information and services to be able to make these choices. This information should be based on scientific knowledge and free of judgments, myths and taboos. Young people should experience their sexuality in a positive way, without violence or cohesion of any type. Governments have to create friendly, free, sensitive, confidential, accessible and high quality sexual and reproductive health services for young people. These services should include a full range of contraceptive methods to prevent HIV/AIDS.

Until now, the safest way to protect yourself from HIV/AIDS during sexual intercourse is by using correctly the female or male

condom. Studies have shown that for serodiscordant couples (when one of the partners is infected and the other is not) who have regular sexual intercourse and constantly use condoms, the HIV negative person has near zero risk of HIV infection.

The only way to win this battle is by using the weapon of INFORMATION. We have to find a way to let every single person in the world, regardless of age, race, sex, nationality, sexual orientation, language, socio economic position, political ideas, marital status or any other circumstance or characteristic know about HVI/AIDS: what it is and how to avoid getting infected.

By Gabriela Cano Azcárraga

### HIV/AIDS Facts:

*Over 15000 men, women and children are infected with HIV each day. Half of all people who acquire HIV become infected before the age of 25.*

*95% of people with HIV/AIDS live in developing countries, where HIV is spread primarily through heterosexual intercourse*

## Cultural Barriers

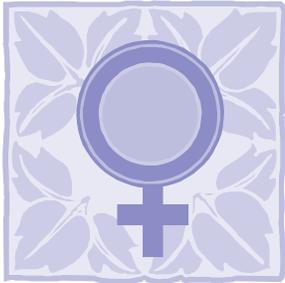
As in other regions, in the Asia Pacific region, cultural barriers impede young women's access to education, information and services pertaining particularly to sexual and reproductive health. The diversity of cultures and socio-economic conditions inform the level of access demonstrating that there is an underlying framework of patriarchy that operates to disempower women by creating a situation where information is withheld from them. It has been repeatedly recognized that information is the way to empowerment however, in the vast majority of the

Asia Pacific region save a few countries, young girls have limited access to education. In the sphere of sexual and reproductive health information and services, the taboo of speaking about sex persists to relegate this issue to the private domain and thus, beyond the scope of State or public intervention.

Culture and tradition, the illusive culture and precious tradition that some seek to preserve - some even till death - in many cases works to undermine women's rights. Numerous examples of traditions are present that operate to

devalue women. Consider the example of dowry, which continues to be a problem that plagues many countries in the Asia Pacific region and is the source of violence against women in many different forms. In light of the impact of such traditions, is it not essential to recognise the universality and supremacy of human rights and recognise that women's rights are human rights. Is it not the responsibility of governments to protect and promote the rights of ALL the citizens?

By Zahra Ahmed



*It is necessary to break down all the taboos and myths that prevent women from enjoying a complete life. The Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the right of all human beings to enjoy all human rights without any exception. To violate that right is a serious attack on human integrity.*

## The Richness of Diversity

Sexuality is a fundamental part in the life of every human being. And it goes much further beyond reproduction. Sexuality involves the way we establish relations with people around us, attain an important stage of personal development and share love, pleasure and confidence.

In most countries, human rights violations, authoritarianism, exclusion and violence stem from traditional attitudes adopted by governments. These attitudes unfortunately get reflected in laws and also society in general. Together they promote roles and stereotypes that hinder ways that women express and exercise their sexuality, especially in the case of lesbians, bisexuals or those with a transgender preference.

The fight against discrimination of women who are not heterosexuals is a fight that has to be waged at all levels if we are to realize a world where every person can enjoy all her/his human rights.

It is necessary to break down all the taboos and myths that prevent women from enjoying a complete life. The Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the right of all human beings to enjoy all human rights without any exception. To violate that right is a serious attack on human integrity.

In social structures where youth have no voice, lesbian, bisexual or transgender young women have to face a very complex kind of discrimination. Not only are they considered non-sexual human beings, they

become the heterosexual 'deviants' as well. It becomes almost impossible for them to have access to sensitive and respectful educational and health-care services that cover their specific needs, to have access to fully respectful spaces for recreation, to be able to participate freely without being exposed to violence.

To promote and defend the right to self-determination in all aspects of life, we need to work towards construction of a society which is not afraid to break the chains of ignorance, a society that won't allow abuse, harmful taboos, lies and myths, a society that enjoys the richness of diversity.

By Gabriela Cano Azcárraga

# Women Definitely Can't Wait!

Funny, moving and absolutely fantastic - some words to describe the performance 'Women Can't Wait' by Sarah Jones yesterday in a gathering organised by Equality Now. After an introduction by actor Gwyneth Paltrow, Sarah portrait eight women from different countries addressing the governments at the United Nations during the Special Session. All of these women suffering from discriminatory laws in their homeland.

Praveen Mandvi from India was the first of the eight women to speak. She told the audience in the crowded conference room 4, about how she had been raped several times by her husband. According to the Indian law however sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife is not rape, so her husband was never punished. Emeraude Besson from France used humour to

make her point about a law in her country, which prohibits women from working at night. For her as a schoolteacher who also worked the late hours, this caused a problem. Emeraude was able to think of several reasons why this law existed, the main reason being the fact that men think women can not find their way home in the dark.

Using a scarf to switch identities, Sarah focused on the marriage law in Japan - where a woman has to wait for six months before she can get married again- and the extinction of rape by marriage in Uruguay, where a rapist won't be prosecuted when he marries the girl or young woman he raped. The problem of Shira Ben-Ya'akov from Israel was that she, as a woman, can not get a divorce in her country, not even when her husband is beating her.

The performance got emotional when Sarah played the role of Hala Rahal from Jordan, whose younger sister was killed by her brother just because she ran away from a forced marriage. Killing to defend the honour of the family they call it, but the killer doesn't really get punished. Ana from Kenya talked about how the absence of a law can also kill girls and young women. In her country no law prohibiting female genital mutilation exists, even though this practice can lead to death. The last speaker Sarah portrayed was also the youngest, Bonita from New York. In her own way she told about how she ended up in jail for manslaughter after killing her ex-boyfriend in an act of defence, when he came to her shooting a gun.

By Alicia Karssing

## Young Women's Realities

Five young women shared their realities, point of views and recommendations at an international dialogue of Youth for Women's Rights in the UN yesterday. Their stories represent experiences from different countries and regions and are full of emotions.

Young people do not just need health and education services, but also sexual and reproductive health services where they are treated in a respectful, comprehensive and non-judgmental way. With this comment, Mariana Nasser from Brazil opened the floor to five realities.

One of the members of the panel, Cecilia Correa from Argentine, spoke about a

girl who was stigmatized by society because she got pregnant by her father. Because of this, the girl was seen as a shame by the people in her village and was told to leave. She stressed the importance that all young women, in and out of the big cities, should have access to legal assistance that promote human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

A very moving reality was given by Hanan Boudart from Palestine, who was an active rebel in her country. She was accepted as a fighter but not as a woman when she choose to marry a man from a different country and religion. Her choice was not respected. She expressed that govern-

ments in this Beijing process have to come closer to women's needs, recognize diversity and promote their right to self determination.

It was shown that young women from each region have their own specific needs, concerns and hopes, but also have much in common. It is important that young women should work together and strengthen their networks in order to realize their common dreams.

We want the fulfillment of our dreams and we urge governments to move forward in Beijing+5 by including the rights of young women in the PFA.

By Mariana Nasser & Rose Koenders

F.A.K.E.  
WOMEN

Feminists Alive and  
Kicking for Equality

*Cecilia Correa from Argentine, spoke about a girl who was stigmatized by society because she got pregnant by her father. Because of this, the girl was seen as a shame by the people in her village and was told to leave. She stressed the importance that all young women, in and out of the big cities, should have access to legal assistance that promote human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.*

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*We're on the Web!*

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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 rep-

## **Indian Youth Statement**

"We, the Young Citizens' Action Network, meeting in New Delhi, India, on the 5th-6th June 2000, to join in the Beijing Plus Five performance review of the Beijing Platform for Action, recognizing that the Special Session June 2000 of the UN General Assembly on Beijing Plus Five assessing world performance on implementation, will bring forward international and national commitment for further action to ensure and secure the advancement of women and girl children, express our deep concern at the lack of national and world progress in meeting the targets set and agreed in 1995.

We draw attention to the failure in the review process and therefore in the outcome document to recognize and acknowledge the presence and importance of youth and the critical value of investing in their development and empowerment as the foundation for progress.

We declare that insufficient attention has been paid, and inadequate investment made, both in addressing the rights and needs of young people, or in recognizing their potential to be leaders and agents of change.

We call upon the UN and all UN Member-States, now meeting in the UNGASS, to establish in their policy decisions, a recognition of and commitment to the rights and role of youth in effecting the changes needed for the genuine advancement of women and girl children in all critical areas of concern.

We demand that the designing of policies at both the international and national levels and the commitment of resources for development, must recognize that the world now has the largest-ever generation of young people entering adulthood, that the people of poor nations, who comprise the majority of the world's people, are predominantly young, and take conscious and affirmative action to

enable young people to realize their full potential and contribute fully to social, economic and political development, which would include providing equal opportunities to young women and girls.

Mindful of our obligation to the future, we call upon the UNGASS to make a special commitment to the girl child among the world's female people, to ensure the survival, development and well-being of the youngest, and most vulnerable and their rights to equality and advancement. We call for the full recognition of the girl child in the women's empowerment agenda.

We, the Young Citizens' Action Network, commit ourselves to uphold these demands and strive for the realization of equality, justice, development and peace for all women and men."

### **Colofon**

*Zahra Ahmed (NAPY), Alicia Karssing, Erin McGinn, Sonu Chhina, Fredrik Lindahl, Rose Koenders, Marianna Nasser, Gabriella Cano Azcarraga, Nadia van der Linde, Mariana Nasser, A Concerned Youth Delegate, Liam Swiss. And Scot*

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