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Human Rights Council 26th session
Adoption of UPR outcome on Slovakia, 20 June 2014

Mr. President,

I speak on behalf of the Center for Reproductive Rights, and two Slovak non-governmental organizations Citizen, Democracy and Accountability, and Freedom of Choice.

We welcome Slovakia's commitment to adopt a national program on reproductive health, by accepting recommendations from Belgium and Netherlands. We urge Slovakia to ensure the program is comprehensive, based on international human rights and WHO standards, and supported by sufficient financial and human resources. We also welcome Slovakia's commitment to ensure access to quality sexuality education, as recommended by Mexico. We urge the government to make sure that the national program aims to establish sexuality education that is mandatory, comprehensive and based on evidence and human rights.

We regret that Slovakia does not consider subsidization of hormonal contraceptives to be a component of the right to the highest attainable standard of health. We continue to be concerned about the legislative ban to cover contraceptives used solely for pregnancy prevention under public health insurance, and the prohibitive cost of contraceptives which makes it inaccessible for many women. The theoretical possibility to subsidize contraceptives for health reasons other than pregnancy prevention will not address the inaccessibility of modern contraceptives.

In the process of implementing the UPR recommendations we urge the government to address the following reproductive rights issues that remain of concern.

Women face several barriers in access to legal abortion services. For instance, they are being subjected to a mandatory waiting period and biased counseling prior to abortion. Medical abortion is not allowed in Slovakia and abortion on request is not subsidized, which makes it inaccessible to low-income and young women. Doctors are obliged to report on women requesting abortions, including their personal data, to a state institution. Moreover, the use of conscientious objection is not adequately regulated since it does not ensure that women's access to lawful and timely medical care is not hampered by health providers' refusals to provide care. Finally, the lack of comprehensive data and surveys on reproductive health indicators prevents the state from adopting efficient reproductive health policies.

We strongly encourage the government to develop laws and policies that guarantee access to affordable and acceptable reproductive health services to all women.

Thank you.