

This newsletter presents monthly highlights of EPF's and our member parliamentary groups' work and gives an overview of legislative and Parliamentary initiatives on sexual and reproductive health and rights and international development in Europe and around the world on the part of the global community of Parliamentarians committed to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

Enjoy the reading!

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## I. EPF Activities January 2009

### 1. Reproductive Health: Focus of First Lady of Georgia visit to Brussels

In the framework of her visit to Brussels on 26 January, H.E. Mrs. Sandra Roelofs, the First Lady of Georgia visited EPF's offices to inform herself about EPF's current activities and parliamentary work on SRHR across Europe and at EU level. Mrs. Roelofs is actively working on the UN Millennium Development Goals with a special focus on the reduction of maternal and child mortality, extreme poverty and infectious diseases. The visit, organised by EPF in cooperation with the Embassy of Georgia in Brussels was designed to exchange views and discuss strategies on recent SRHR developments across Europe and in the EU with leading experts in this field.



Together with the Georgian Delegation, headed by Hon. George Tsereteli, MP, Vice President of the Georgian Parliament and Member of the EPF Executive Committee, that comprised leading health experts and government representatives of Georgia, the First Lady met with Hon. Anne Van Lancker, MEP, EPF President and Chair of the European Parliament's Working Group on Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS and Development (EPWG), EU



Commission Representatives as well as Members of the EP Delegation to the South Caucasus, UNFPA, selected reproductive health experts and NGOs in the European Parliament. The First Lady gave a comprehensive overview about the public health situation in Georgia that has improved considerably in recent years. In the framework of the Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus (RHIYC), a joint EC/UNFPA Project to which EPF is a partner, sexual and reproductive health and rights have been made a priority in Georgia receiving prominent support from leading government representatives as well as from the First Lady. Since October 2004 Mrs. Roelofs is the Chairperson of the Country Coordinating Mechanism for projects of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in Georgia and of the Reproductive Health National Council under the Georgian Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and, together with Hon. George Tsereteli, MP, has been instrumental in supporting political and legislative advancement on this topic. The humanitarian consequences in the aftermath of the Georgian-Russian conflict in August 2008 as well as the outcomes of the Governments and Donor Conference that was held in October 2008 in Brussels were also discussed during the meeting.

The visit in the Belgian Parliament hosted by Hon. Hilde Vautmans, MP and EPF Executive Committee Member who participated in the EPF fact-finding mission to Georgia on Emergency Reproductive Health Needs of Internally Displaced People in August last year focused on the exchange of views on the work and experiences of the Belgian All Party Parliamentary Group on the MDGs and the latest health-care reforms in Georgia. Both sides expressed their commitment to continue working on the advancement of SRHR issues on the agenda of their respective governments and explored possibilities for working together in the future.

EPF will continue to support the efforts of the First Lady and Georgian stakeholders in reproductive health on all ICPD plus 15 related activities, including a planned International Parliamentarians' Conference on ICPD and MDG 5 scheduled to take place in Cairo, Egypt in October 2009 and in mobilising other First Ladies in the European region to take up leadership roles in reproductive health advocacy.

For more information on the First Lady's visit, reproductive health efforts in Georgia and the South Caucasus or the health needs of internally displaced persons following the military conflict of August 2008, please contact Marina Davidashvili at [marina@iepfpd.org](mailto:marina@iepfpd.org).

## II. Parliamentary Leadership

### 1. Positive achievements in fighting sexual violence against women in Burundi

Update from MP Pascasie NKINAHAMIRA, member of the Parliamentary Network on Population and Development (PNPD) of the Burundian Parliament

In 2008, the Parliamentary Network on Population and Development (PNPD) of the Burundian Parliament was actively involved in fighting violence against women, and particularly in the fight against sexual violence. With the kind support of UNFPA, the PNPD organised several information and awareness raising workshops targeting local officials of 17 provinces of Burundi around this issue. These workshops gathered Government's officials, Parliamentarians, traditional and religious local leaders, NGOs and associations working on violence against women, including sexual violence, enabling fruitful exchanges of views. The discussions highlighted that sexual violence against women is a sad reality in Burundi and that the situation became even worse with the crisis. Participants understood the need to become more involved in this fight in order to eradicate violence against women in the country and called for more severe sanctions against perpetrators of violence. The penal code being out of date since 1981, Parliamentarians called for the draft law proposal on the revision of the penal code to include adequate sanctions for such crimes. The law on the revision of the penal code, which was adopted by the National Assembly on 21 November 2008, adopted these recommendations. MP Pascasie NKINAHAMIRA, who has been a participant in the G8 Parliamentarians' Conference in Berlin in 2007, highlighted that the penal code increased the sentence for perpetrators of violence against women, stating that a complementary sentence such as a public presentation of the condemned could be added to the principal sentence, and that the sentence is without remission. She added that other possible improvements may be suggested by the Senate and approved by the Assembly at second reading.

### 2. Dutch Parliament adopts resolution on the creation of heatstable oxytocine

In December 2008 the Dutch Parliament adopted a Resolution on the creation of heatstable oxytocine. The Resolution initiated by EPF Executive Committee member Hon. Chantal Gill'ard, MP and co-signed by members of the Dutch All-Party Parliamentary Group, Hon. Kathleen Ferrier, MP and Hon. Esmé Wiegman, MP asks the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation, Bert Koenders, to contribute 1, 5 million euro to the "project developing" consortium of organisations lead by the WHO-department "Making Pregnancy Safer" and BioConnection, who will use the freeze-dry technique to make oxytocine heatstable.



The WHO estimates that 25% of all maternal deaths are caused by postpartum haemorrhage (extensive bleeding due to labour). Postpartum haemorrhage is a major problem particularly in combination with poor nutrition and lack of access to treatment. The use of oxytocine helps to reduce the amount of blood loss and will save women from bleeding to death. However, the medicine needs to be kept between 2-5 degrees Celsius, which is often not possible in developing countries. The creation of heatstable Oxytoncine is, therefore, a crucial point in reducing maternal mortality.

[Resolution \(Dutch version only\)](#)

### 3. European Parliamentarians voice concern about imprisonment of Senegalese homosexuals

In a letter to their Senegalese counterparts, Hon. Anne Van Lancker, MEP and EPF President, Senator Alain Desthèxhe, President of the Belgian Parliamentary Group on the MDGs, Hon. Françoise Castex, MEP and Hon. Sophie In't Veld, MEP voiced concern about the recent sentencing of nine Senegalese homosexuals to eight years imprisonment by a Senegalese court. The nine men who were involved in HIV-prevention work were arrested in December 2008 for violating article 319.3 of Senegalese criminal code which provides that "whoever commits an improper or unnatural act with a person of the same sex will be punished by imprisonment of between one and five years". The sentences, pronounced on 7 January 2009 followed a series of arrests and judgments which took place in 2008 and build on a consistent background of increased hostility, harassment and discrimination towards homosexuals in Senegal.

EPF's member groups from Belgium, France, and the Netherlands called on members of the Senegalese Parliamentary Network on Population and Development to mobilise parliamentary colleagues as well as Senegalese authorities to speak out against discrimination, particularly against the criminalisation of consensual sexual conduct between same-sex couple as well as combating the incitement to hostility and violence against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation or their gender. In addition, European Parliamentarians offered their full support to the Senegalese Parliamentary Network on Population and Development in their efforts to fight for the respect of minority rights and against discrimination. Grateful for the European parliamentary support, the President of the Senegalese Parliamentary Network on Population and Development, Hon. Elhadji Malick Diop, MP replied that a copy of this letter was sent to the President of the Senegalese National Assembly as well as the President of the Committee for Legal Affairs. In addition, the Coordinator of the National Committee to fight HIV/AIDS was informed about the letter. Having undertaken key follow-up actions at the highest level, Hon. Diop was confident that a positive solution would be found to this disturbing issue.

For more information, contact Vincent Villeneuve, EPF Advocacy Assistant at: [Vincent@iepfpd.org](mailto:Vincent@iepfpd.org)

## III. APPG Affairs



### 1. German Parliamentary Forum on SRHR conducts workshop for Journalists

The workshop held on 24 January 2009 focused on the upcoming elections to the European Parliament and was part of a wider programme of the German Parliamentary Forum for Journalists that included several weekend-seminars throughout 2007 and 2008 as well as a study tour on SRHR relevant issues.

In June more than 490 million Europeans will have the chance to vote 736 Members of the European Parliament.

Together with Hon. Angelika Graf, MP and Member of the German Parliamentary Forum on SRHR as well as several experts, participants discussed how conservative the new European Parliament is likely to become and what this would mean for the advancement of SRHR issues at European level, which role and influence church and anti-choice groups are likely to play and which side German MEPs are likely to take on SRHR issues in this new European Parliament.

For more information on the workshop, please contact Ms. Margit Miosga at: [mio@snaflu.de](mailto:mio@snaflu.de).

### 2. Azeri Draft Law on Reproductive Health faces obstacles

During the last session of the Azerbaijan Parliament, Hon. Malahat Hasanova, MP and Member of the Parliamentary Committee on Social Affairs presented the progressive and forward-looking "Draft Law on Reproductive Health". She underlined that the draft law foresees the protection of reproductive health and creates the basis of family planning. As reported in the October edition of the EPF Newsletter, the draft law ensures the right of the Azerbaijan population to reproductive health choice and modern family planning. It includes the right to benefit from assisted reproduction technologies, ensures the proper information of the citizens, their right to full and informed RH choice as well as right of women to decide over their bodies in case of an unwanted pregnancy.

In the meantime, a number of parliamentarians as well as a number of religious organisations in the country have voiced concern over articles included in the draft law especially on "surrogate motherhood" and "artificial insemination". In order to better discuss and accommodate the voiced concerns where possible, the Draft Law has been sent back to the Parliamentary Committee on Social Affairs for revision.



For more information contact Marina Davidashvili, Network and Knowledge Sharing Facilitator, Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus at: [Marina@iepfpd.org](mailto:Marina@iepfpd.org)

## EPF – EU News Supplement Election Update

To keep our members and readers up to date, EPF will issue a regular news supplement on the upcoming elections to the European Parliament to be held in all EU Member States from 4-7 June 2009.

The supplement features amongst others reports about the latest developments, initiatives and facts with regard to the pre-election period and intends to provide views and background information in the run-up to this event.

Enjoy the reading

### 1. Countdown for European Parliamentary Elections has started.

2009 has arrived and we are just a bit over 5 months away from the European elections. These elections will not only bring about change. They also amount to the single biggest EU-wide exercise in legislative democracy. Between 4 and 7 June 2009, 500 million EU citizens in 27 EU Member States will have their chance to shape the future EU. 736 Members of Parliament are to be elected. To raise awareness amongst the electorate and to increase of what has been a low voter turnout in previous European elections, the European Parliament has introduced a special section on the European elections in June. Besides an interactive country map that shows how many MEPs per country will have to be elected, the website lists 10 good reasons to vote, makes an attempt to explain the role and function of the European Parliament and encourages citizens to post comments on various topics and policy fields of the EU.

To access the EP website click [here](#).



### 2. Eurobarometer poll shows economic fears ahead of June European elections

Economic volatility, rising prices and a general pessimism about what the future holds were all opinions voiced in a recent "Eurobarometer" European survey conducted on October and November 2008. With the 2009 European elections scheduled for June, voters will be keen to see how the European Union can collectively turn the tide on rising economic uncertainty.

#### Europeans pessimistic about economic future

As the majority of European countries enter prolonged periods of negative growth it is clear that these troubling times are affecting voter priorities. According to the survey, Europeans appear particularly pessimistic about the global economic situation, which 71% of respondents consider to be bleak. However, the state of the European economy is seen more positively with 33% of citizens believing it to be fairly good.

Individual citizens remained positives on the whole. When asked to comment on their personal situation, 64% were positive about the financial situation of their household and 56% found their current job situation good.

#### Inflation, unemployment, pensions

In autumn 2008 rising prices, inflation and the economic situation were the two most frequently mentioned concerns in Europe. In 15 Members States, inflation is seen as the top national concern with Austrian citizens voicing the most concern. The Netherlands registered the highest anxiety over the economic situation. Other concerns include unemployment, healthcare, immigration and pensions.

#### EU membership: 'a good thing'

Membership of the European Union is still seen as a good thing by a majority of Europeans with 53% showing support. Only 15% of Europeans consider their country's membership as a bad thing, though all figures vary strongly between individual countries. A majority of Europeans think that their country has on balance profited from membership (56%) with around a third of respondents (31%) feeling that their country has not benefited. Countries holding this negative outlook include Hungary, Cyprus and the United Kingdom.

To see the full Eurobarometer results click [here](#).

Source: [www.europarl.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.europa.eu)



**EUROBAROMETER**

## IV. EPF - European Parliament Relations:



### 1. Anne Van Lancker: "Commission fails on development assistance to health services in Africa"

In a press briefing on 14 January 2009, the European Court of Auditors has presented its Special Report on "EC Development Assistance to Health Services in Sub-Saharan Africa". The conclusions are disastrous for the EC policy. "For years the Commission is promoting the MDGs and puts it high on the political agenda, but in reality nothing has changed", says Hon. Anne Van Lancker, MEP and EPF President in a press release. "How can you pretend giving priority to the MDGs if allocations to the health sector in sub-Saharan Africa have not increased since 2000 as a proportion to total ODA?" she asks, highlighting that the Court of Auditor's Report officially confirms what was already mentioned by the joint EPF/DSW Study 'Euromapping 2008' on health issues in general and sexual and reproductive health issues in particular. "More and better aid in the health sector is urgently needed if the Commission wants to fulfil her commitments towards the Millennium Development Goals!" Hon. Anne Van Lancker, MEP concludes.



The full text of the press release is provided in the Annex of the newsletter. The Court of Auditor's Special Report can be downloaded [here](#).

### 2. European Parliament adopts Report on Fundamental Rights with progressive SRHR language

On 14 January, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union (2004-2007) with a comfortable majority (401 to 220 with 67 abstentions). The own-initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Giusto Catania (GUE/NGL, IT) on behalf of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.



The progressive and forward-looking resolution recalls that the effective protection and the promotion of fundamental rights form the basis of democracy in Europe and are prerequisites for the consolidation of the European area of freedom, security and justice. However, a genuine 'culture of fundamental rights' in the Union calls for the development of a comprehensive system for monitoring the application of those rights. MEPs take the view that the practical application of fundamental rights must be an objective of all European policies. In this context, MEPs welcome the setting-up of the Agency for Fundamental Rights, even though its remit remains very limited. The second part of the resolution takes a close look at each of the fundamental rights and includes strong language on minorities, sexual orientation and equal opportunities where the report "stresses the need to raise public awareness of the right to reproductive and sexual health, and calls on the Member States to ensure that women can fully enjoy these rights, to put in place appropriate sex education, information and confidential advisory services, and to facilitate access to contraception in order to prevent all unwanted pregnancies and illegal and high-risk abortions, and to combat the practice of female genital mutilation".

EPF is in the process of analysing the voting behaviour of MEPs on this resolution. The results will be made available shortly.

The full report can be accessed [here](#).



### V. Malaria News

#### 1. Launch of the fourth Report on Malaria & Neglected Tropical Diseases by the British All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPMG): "Delivering Malaria Control to Those in Need: How to Succeed in a Time of Renewed Hope"

On Wednesday 17th December 2008, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Malaria & Neglected Tropical Diseases (APPMG) of the British Parliament published its fourth report entitled "Delivering Malaria Control to Those in Need: How to Succeed in a Time of Renewed Hope". The British APPMG is chaired by Hon. Stephen O'Brien, MP member of EPF Malaria Taskforce.



The report, authored by Professor Christopher Whitty of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine with the assistance of Dr Sylvia Meek of Malaria Consortium, concludes that no child or adult should die of malaria given the availability of the very effective tools both to prevent and treat. The millions of deaths annually are largely due to failure of delivery of these tools to those who need them, particularly the poorest, and especially children. The effect of improved delivery on malaria control is clearly shown in countries such as Ethiopia, Rwanda and Eritrea, and the report calls for existing failures to be addressed in order to defeat the disease.

The report has six key recommendations arising from its conclusions:

1. Net delivery systems must also promote net use and retention.
2. Decisions regarding delivery of treatment should involve public sector, civil society and private sector. Decisions should be based on evidence of what works and not ideology.
3. Treatment and prevention interventions must be context specific and country tailored.
4. New drugs and insecticide development are essential. This should occur in parallel with investment in research into better ways to deliver our existing tools.
5. It is vital that funding needs to be increased, sustained and predictable.
6. Political support is required for more coordination of efforts globally and nationally.

Hon. Stephen O'Brien, MP Chair of the APPMG and Member of EPF Malaria Taskforce said "Malaria remains one of the biggest killers of children and pregnant women, but the evidence shows that there has been real progress in recent years. Now that there are many effective new tools available, the challenge is how they can be delivered to the right place at the right time."

The report can be downloaded at: <http://www.appmg-malaria.org.uk/uploads/4E72817A-E9B9-0242-16B4566CF22C9087/APPMG%204th%20Report.pdf>

On 17 April 2007, EPF created a Parliamentary Taskforce in order to coordinate and develop a cohesive partnership amongst European Parliamentarians willing to increase development aid funding and promote solutions for effective malaria reduction. EPF Malaria Taskforce is benefiting from the expertise of key malaria partners such as the Malaria Consortium. The main activities of EPF Taskforce on Malaria include inter-Parliamentary visits, Parliamentary hearings and reports on malaria-related issues, and Parliamentary study tours to developing countries.

For joining EPF Malaria Taskforce (for Parliamentarians only) or for more information about the Taskforce, please contact Ms Silvia Theodoridis at [Silvia@iepfpd.org](mailto:Silvia@iepfpd.org)

## VI. Changes in the U.S. with regard to SRHR

### 1. New U.S. administration overturns Global Gag Rule and restores funding to UNFPA

One of President Obama's first actions after taking office was to restore U.S. funding for UNFPA's operations. This sent out a strong message that "the U.S. will resume its leadership in promoting and protecting women's reproductive health and rights worldwide" UNFPA Executive Director Thoraya Ahmed Obaid said. Congressionally-approved funding for UNFPA has been withheld by the U.S. administration for the past seven years with the Fund not having received a total of \$244 million in U.S. funding. The United States, which was integral to forming UNFPA in 1969, is the only country in the world that has ever refused to fund the agency for reasons that are political rather than financial. On 27 January 2009 UNFPA staff sent out a moving letter conveying "heartfelt thanks" to the many supporters of the Fund during this difficult seven year period. Thanks to this generous support from around the world, the feared cuts in programming and services never materialized. On the contrary, UNFPA was able to expand its operations around the world.



In addition, a day after the U.S. marked the 36th anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision (22 January), President Barak Obama rescinded the controversial global gag and recommitted U.S. support for comprehensive international family planning. The global gag rule — also known as the Mexico City policy where it was unveiled in 1984 during a U.N. conference — denies federal funding to international family planning organizations that with their own funds provide abortion services and information. Obama said in a written statement that during the past two terms of former President George W. Bush, the policy has "undermined efforts to promote safe and effective voluntary family planning in developing countries. For these reasons, it is right for us to rescind this policy and restore critical efforts to protect and empower women and promote global economic development." Originally a Reagan-era incarnation, the gag rule was repealed by President Bill Clinton and then reinstated by President George W. Bush on the first day of his administration in 2001.

### VII. EPF Activities – Outlook 2009:

#### Major Parliamentary Events

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- 22-23 June: G8 Parliamentary Meeting on Reproductive and Global Health, Rome  
All EPF Member Parliamentary Groups will be invited and may send 2 Representatives
- 26-28 October: Fourth International Parliamentarians Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action Conference, Cairo, combined with EPF Executive Committee and Council meetings, and preceded by High-level Conference on MDG 5: Maternal Mortality hosted by the Dutch Minister for Development, H.E. Bert Koenders.

As the major Parliamentary event on ICPD, all EPF Member Parliamentary Groups will be invited to nominate representatives to the Conference. EPF coordinates the Europe Region delegation to the Conference.

#### Conferences, Workshops & Seminars for Parliamentarians:

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- 23-24 March: Parliamentary Conference on Climate Change and Population – Oslo, Norway - within the context of Countdown 2015  
Parliamentarians interested in population and climate change and environmental issues will be invited as well as all EPF Member Groups.
- TBD September: Parliamentary Conference on EU Commitment to meeting the MDGs and Global Health, Brussels (to take place once the European Parliament has reconvened in September 2008) – within the context of Action for Global Health  
Parliamentarians from EU Member States, MEPs and political parties will be invited as well as EPF Member parliamentary groups.
- TBD – Reproductive Health Forum For Youth in the South Caucasus, Tbilisi, Georgia  
Parliamentarians interested in youth reproductive health and the South Caucasus are welcome and the Parliamentary Groups of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia will be invited.

#### Parliamentary Study Tours to Developing Countries:

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- Late March - Study Tour to Cameroon on Malaria & EU Development Policy  
Parliamentarians who are members of the EPF Malaria Taskforce will be invited, as well as other Parliamentarians from EPF Member Groups interested in Malaria and/or Cameroon
- 6-10 April: Study Tour to Burkina Faso on Reproductive Health Supplies  
Parliamentarians from EPF Member Groups will be invited – French will be the working language of the visit – this is an activity within the context of Countdown 2015, in collaboration with Equilibres & Populations.
- TBD May: Study Tour to Zambia on Reproductive Health Supplies  
Parliamentarians from EPF Member Groups will be invited – English will be the working language of the visit – this is an activity within the context of Countdown 2015, in collaboration with RFSU

### UN Events of Interest to Parliamentarians and SRHR

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- 30 March-3 April 2009: UN Commission on Population and Development (42<sup>nd</sup> session), New York  
*EPF will support the participation of Parliamentarians in the UN CPD meeting from UN Member States which are members of the Commission on Population and Development, namely Parliamentarians from: Belgium, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, Bulgaria, and Poland*

### Internal EPF: Executive Committee Meetings and APPG Secretariats Meetings

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- 23 February : EPF Executive Committee Meeting, Brussels  
Executive Committee Members and Observers (UNFPA and IPPF EN Directors) will be invited
- TBD June : EPF Executive Committee Meeting, Brussels  
Executive Committee Members and Observers (UNFPA and IPPF EN Directors) will be invited
- TBD October: EPF Executive Committee Meeting, Cairo  
Executive Committee Members and Observers (UNFPA and IPPF EN Directors) will be invited
- TBD : APPGs Secretariat Meeting  
Staff and NGO advocates providing the Secretariat support to respective EPF member Parliamentary Groups, and UNFPA and IPPF as Observers, will be invited. Venue to be decided – open to invitations to host from APPG Secretariats.

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As of 13 January 2009

### The EPF Secretariat

The EPF secretariat is based in Brussels and is responsible for implementing all EPF activities. EPF maintains a website with information about its activities and a monthly News Update on the activities of Parliamentarians, SRHR and development policy and related items. It can be found at [www.iefpd.org](http://www.iefpd.org).

As of 1 September, the EPF Secretariat staff is composed as follows (in alphabetical order):

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### EPF's Mission

The European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development believes Parliamentarians have the opportunity and the responsibility to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender equality, which are core elements of human dignity and are central to human development.

### About EPF

The European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development is a Brussels-based Parliamentary network that serves as a platform for cooperation and coordination for the 25 all-party groups in Parliaments throughout Europe that focus on improving sexual and reproductive health and rights at home and abroad through national and regional health and foreign aid budgets.

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#### EPF is a member of:

- The European Alliance against Malaria
- Countdown 2015 Europe
- The Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in the South Caucasus (RHIYC)
- The Steering Committee of the International Parliamentarians' Conference of the Implementation of the IPCI Programme of Action (IPCI/ICPD)

#### EPF

- is an Associate Member of EuroNGOs
- has Special Consultative Status with the United Nation's Economic and Social Council
- has Participatory Status with the Council of Europe

## Annex



persbericht 14 januari 2009

### Commission fails on development assistance to health services in Africa

In a press briefing this morning the European Court of Auditors has presented her Special Report on "EC Development Assistance to Health Services in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The conclusions are disastrous for the EC policy. "For years the Commission is promoting the MDGs and puts it high on the political agenda, but in reality nothing has changed", says Anne Van Lancker, Socialist MEP, "How can you pretend giving priority to the MDGs if allocations to the health sector in sub-Saharan Africa have not increased since 2000 as a proportion to total ODA?"

According to the European Court of Auditors, the Commission has mobilised significant additional funding to contribute to the Global Fund against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. "However, the Commission has only focused on tackling these three diseases rather than on support to basic health systems. It's unacceptable that every year children die of an easily curable disease like diarrhoea," says Anne Van Lancker. The European Parliament requires allocating 20% to basic health and primary and secondary education in country programmes, but the European Commission doesn't meet this benchmark.

The report is not only critical of the financial topics. According to the European Court of Auditors, the European Commission does not have sufficient health expertise to adequately implement its health policy and has not made systematic arrangements to draw on alternative sources of expertise.

The report states that the Commission fails to link general budget support with health. Sector budget support focused on health has been little used in sub-Saharan Africa. "However, sector budget support with outcome based indicators has a potential to be an important instrument for improving health services in this region where women face a 1 in 16 lifetime risk of dying from pregnancy-related causes," according to Anne Van Lancker.

The report officially confirms what was already mentioned by EPF/DSW in 'Euromapping 2008' on health issues in general and sexual and reproductive health issues in particular. "More and better aid in the health sector is urgently needed if the Commission wants to fulfil her commitments towards the Millennium Development Goals!" concluded Anne Van Lancker, president of the European Parliamentary Forum (EPF).

More information? Anne Van Lancker - 0032 (0)476 43 12 94