Marinella – Talking Points for EWEC Event (4 min. remarks and 1 min. question)

Hello. My name is Marinella Matejcic, and I am a member of the ASTRA Youth Network and a Women Deliver Young Leader. I would like to join Lucia in thanking Every Woman Every Child for the invitation to today's event. It has been a fascinating conversation so far.

As a sexual and reproductive health and rights activist in Croatia, I work to hold legislators accountable to keep abortion in Croatia legal and to ensure the availability of accurate information about reproductive health and sexual rights to women who need it.

In my advocacy work, some of the challenges have been Croatia's struggling health care system. Due to outdated systems and unstable economy, many women simply aren't in the financial situation to receive the health care they need and deserve.

This has created a situation in which women simply aren't allowed to make decisions about their own bodies.

But despite these challenges, young feminists, and non-governmental organizations are doing incredible work on women's human and work rights, working on gender-based violence, women participation and sexual and reproductive health and rights, coping with problems like disrespect and abuse, lack of access due to objections of conscience that make women seek illegal abortions after hours.

Primary school enrollment for girls is nearly equal to that of their male counterparts and nearly all women deliver their babies in a health care facility. Croatia's maternal mortality ratio is even lower than the European average. Still, disrespect and abuse in childbirth are wide-spread, but there is no proper data on the subject. When it comes to abortion, it is legal upon tenth week of pregnancy but approximately every fifth hospital does not provide that service, due to objections of conscience. That is the main reason women have hard time exercising their human rights: institutions use object of conscience as an excuse to deny that service to women.

When it comes to my work on the matter of abortion accessibility, we have conducted a guerilla research, called every hospital that is supposed to provide abortions and published all the data on a web page. The web page itself is completely oriented on abortion accessibility and is now being used by women who wish to find proper information on the subject. Some church-affiliated NGOs are pushing unscientific references to mislead those who wish to know more about different aspects of bodily autonomy. My piece on abortion accessibility got published on a Croatian portal libela.org and after that, things started to move. Our former liberal government intervened and made the hospitals obey the law. Since Croatia has a new, more conservative government, we don't know what can we expect.

While we are discussing abortion and sexual and reproductive health and rights in Europe, it is important to emphasize the fact that, as we speak, nearly 14000 people are trapped on the

Balkan route, and 60 percent of them are women and children. Refugee women now face lack of access to maternity care, contraceptives, and sex ed. We need to provide comprehensive reproductive care for everyone, thus, that is an important part of women's empowerment.

Now I would like to turn to Her Excellency Natasha Stott Despoja: As the Global Ambassador for Women and Girls, we would be thankful if you could elaborate on:

What are Australia's policies, programs and strategies to support ending violence against women and girls and women's empowerment?

In particular how are these efforts linked to the Australia government's implementation of the commitment to the Global Strategy made last September?

(5 minute response)

Thank you for that answer. Now I would like to ask Ambassador Dho Young-shim:

As the Secretary General outlined in his remarks, Agenda 2030 is integrated, indivisible and universal. How can we ensure implementation of the SDGs take on these important principles? Can you tell us how the SDG Advocates will mobilize more integrated action from the highest levels?