

## **Statement to European Population Forum at the UNECE**

***For the Session on 'Morbidity, mortality and reproductive health: Facing challenges in transition countries'***

**January 13, 2004**

**I fully support the statements of Ms. Valentina Leskaj and of Ms Nolte, which both insist on the fact that Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government cooperation should be improved.**

**I am coming from a transition country - Latvia. The Baltic States are on the boardeline between the West and East. At the moment, we are in the middle of radical changes in all areas of our lives. Our countries still lack the resources for the health sector but at the same time, we are one of the countries which have to face the fastest HIV/AIDS growths in the world.**

**Reproductive health is not always in the agenda of the health reforms. Our government faces many challenges in the reproductive and sexual health field such as unwanted pregnancies, availability of contraceptives, access and affordability of services, STIs, sexual education of youth etc...and especially the rapid increase of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.**

**However, not all of these problems can be successfully solved only by governmental institutions. Within the last decade, NGOs, with the support of international donors, have gained major experience in the area of implementing the ICPD goals of sexual and reproductive health. They built networks throughout the country, they engaged in youth education and became active in political advocacy.**

**In order to have the best resource allocation for cost- effect services, the government should not only cooperate with NGOs , but also delegate some of their functions to them. This would be the best way of reaching vulnerable groups may it be in rural areas (such as youth and men) or in urban areas ( drug users, sex workers...)**

**Therefore I would like to urge international donors to assist the governments in this process.**

**Thank you.  
Iveta Kelle  
President of Family Planning Association of Latvia.**