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Working Session 14, Tolerance and non-discrimination I, including: equal opportunity for women and men in all spheres in life, including through implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality

Discussions of equal opportunity for women and men should not be confused with promoting gender conformity and stereotypes. The decision whether to bear children falls within the purview of individual women exercising their autonomy and rights. In that regard, I would like to **thank the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues (CPRSI) here at ODIHR** for organizing a conference in June 2016 on redress for women who have been subjected to sterilization without their free and informed consent. Experts from countries that have provided or are about to provide redress to women who have suffered these human rights abuses, including Romani women, used that occasion to describe past and future redress processes from Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To the delegation of Uzbekistan, I recommend that Participating state pay particular attention to the practice of the forced sterilization of women and the urgent need for reform there, as described in the [report on this issue produced for the Open Society Foundations](#) by Natalia Anteleva.

To the delegations of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, I recommend they avail themselves of Norway's experiences with providing *ex gratia* compensation in order to redress the hundreds of women who have survived these harms and remain unredressed (Norway's approach will be described in the forthcoming report from the CPRSI on the 1 June 2016 meeting on this issue in Prague). The survivors of these abuses and their civil society allies in the Czech Republic are disappointed that the Government proposed a bill on compensation for these abuses last year and then failed to adopt it, and a coalition of NGOs including women's organizations has [criticized other proposed legislation](#) on the general provision of free legal aid as failing to meet the needs of these women for access to justice and their right to effective remedy.

To the delegations of all Participating states, I recommend they translate into their national languages and incorporate into their gynecology and obstetrics training programs the [2014 interagency statement on eliminating forced, coercive and otherwise involuntary sterilization](#), published jointly by seven UN agencies; the information developed by the [Women's Rights, Health and Empowerment Task Force of the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics \(FIGO\)](#); and the [report on torture in health care settings by the UN Special Rapporteur on torture](#), which has noted that forced sterilization is an act of violence, a form of social control, and a violation of the right to be free from torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment