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Special issue

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KARAT's General Assembly

The first KARAT's General Assembly since 2003 and the third in the history took place on the 6th of June 2010 in Bucharest, Romania. Three new Board members were elected, we amended and updated our Statute (including the most important paragraphs concerning our mission and objectives), discussed KARAT's activities in the past and its plan for the future, and talked about the common implementation of KARAT's Program. We dedicate this issue of KARAT News to this event as its importance for us cannot be overestimated.

For the large number of KARAT members who weren't involved in joint projects so far, the General Assembly was a fantastic opportunity to finally meet face to face. The KARAT's Members participated actively in the discussions; it has been visible that they identify with the Coalition and are willing to contribute to its work and implement common projects aiming at improving of women's situation.

The General Assembly was attended by 37 persons, including 2 researchers interested in the functioning of the Coalition. 27 members organizations sent their delegates to the GA. It is nearly a half of our membership. What is crucial, the most of the countries where KARAT's members operate were represented (15 from 24) – the CIS countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Moldova, Uzbekistan), the Balkan countries (Albania, Macedonia, Serbia), and the EU New Members States (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia).

The evaluation's results indicates that the opportunity to make new contacts was highly appreciated by the members, as well as the positive and energizing atmosphere and the participatory character of the event. Unfortunately, many persons regret that the General Assembly lasted only one day; according to them we should have had more time to tackle more topics and get to know each other better.

For those of you who are interested in the discussions that took place during the GA, the report and the movie from the event will be soon made available on our website www.karat.org.

As the KARAT's Secretariat we would like to thank "AUR" - The National Association of Human Resources Specialists which hosted the General Assembly. We really appreciate your huge effort and we are impressed by the fact that everything was perfectly organized.

We would also like to thank Global Fund For Women and OAK Foundation for their financial support. Without it, we would not have been able to cover the costs of participation of almost 20 persons from our members organizations.

Finally, we would like to thank our members who came to Bucharest, who created a wonderful atmosphere and who contributed to the discussions on the most important challenges faced by our Coalition. Thank you!

KARAT's Secretariat

New mission and objectives adopted

Thirteen years ago, when KARAT was established, its mission and objectives were formulated in the context of the Beijing Conference (1995) and of the challenges of the period of the 90's. Since then, the CEE/CIS Region underwent significant changes, including accession of some countries to EU which to some extent created a divisions within the Region. KARAT has also extended its membership to organizations from Central Asia. Moreover, KARAT itself has changed as well: it has grown and strengthened. It became indispensable to rethink and discuss our mission and objectives. They needed to be revised and updated to reflect in a more precise way what KARAT and its members are working on in 2010.

According to the newly amended Statute, KARAT Coalition has the following mission:

KARAT is a regional coalition of organizations and individuals focusing its action on observance of women's human rights, and ensuring gendered economic and social justice in the Region.

The list of our objectives became longer. From now on KARAT Coalition has the following objectives:

- 1. Advocate for gender-responsive policy, decision-making and alignment of national policy and legislation in all countries in the Region with international standards and agreements.*
- 2. Lobby for the needs and concerns of women in the Region at all levels of decision-making fora.*
- 3. Contribute to the improvement of the socio-economic position of women of the Region.*
- 4. Contribute to the actions related to gender aspects of development.*
- 5. Respond to the threats associated with fundamentalist, conservative, and anti-democratic forces as well peril of military conflict.*
- 6. Strengthen Karat's capacity to deliver its mission.*

We are convinced that the amended Statute will serve us better as now it reflects the contemporary challenges faced by the Coalition.

New Board Members

After the General Assembly we are happy to welcome two new Board Members – Mirela Arqimandriti from Gender Alliance for Development Center (Albania) and Olga Sirbu from Women Political Club 50/50 (Moldova). The third elected person, Raluca Manaila from "AUR" - The National Association of Human Resources Specialists (Romania) is continuing her work at the KARAT's Board as it is her second term of office.

Another important amendment to the Statute adopted by the General Assembly refers to the period of the term of office of the Board members. From now on the Board is elected for a three-years term of office with one year-and-half alternation. As a consequence, Mirela, Olga and Raluca will be Board Members until the June, 2013 and four remaining Board Members – Susanna Vardanyan from Armenia, Michaela Marksova–Tominova from Czech

Republic, Katerina Milenkova-Trajcheva from Macedonia and Zuzana Jezerska from Slovakia - will continue their work until the end of 2011 as their term of office has been prolonged.

We also would like to thank all the persons who decided to candidate to the Board. We appreciate your will to contribute to the KARAT's work.

And last not but not least, great thanks for Valentina Bodrug-Lungu from Moldova and Lyudmila Petina from Belarus whose term of office at the Board has just finished. We are really grateful for your input. We hope that our cooperation in the future will be as fruitful as in the last years.

Highlights from Working Groups - Directions for further development of KARAT's Programs

At the GA, KARAT members worked in groups to elaborate directions for KARAT's Programs development: Gendered Economic & Social Justice; Women's Human Rights; and Gender & Development. Below, you can find highlights of issues discussed in the working groups.

The working group on **Gendered Economic and Social Justice** based on the expertise and experiences of member organizations* proposed to establish an advocacy group for gendered economic and social justice. This group would consist of members who have expertise as well as those who are interested in the issue. It would aim at identifying the main economic and social challenges that women face in the Region by conducting comparative studies. The results of the studies will be included in the advocacy campaign. The other important reason of creating advocacy group is to build capacity of KARAT members by experience and best practices sharing of those member organizations who have already a great knowledge and achievements in this area. Furthermore, it aims to strengthen the KARAT network's gendered economic and social justice's profile as well as members' ownership of this expertise. It has been concluded that active participation KARAT representatives should be secured at the important events on economics and social issues. And finally, the group is meant to respond to the financial challenges that many women's organizations face. Participants concluded that KARAT should be involved in the activities on resources mobilization for women's organizations in the Region.

*e.g. women in informal economy, decent work, social security including advocacy for the amnesty insurance payment for pension for women, cooperation with Trade Unions.

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The participants of the working group on **Gender and Development** agreed that KARAT should continue its education and awareness raising activities in various countries as well as addressing gender issues in development cooperation. KARAT should also use its advantage of its membership from developing countries in Eastern Europe, Balkans and Central Asia as well as EU countries in order to implement common development assistance projects. The latter should be done after careful research and needs assessment among members from developing countries. For more information contact Joanna at joanna.szabunko@karat.org.pl



Working group on **Women's Human Rights** reflected on the joint activities that have been implemented so far, mainly around CEDAW provisions and promotion of Optional Protocol in 9 countries of the Region. It has been concluded that KARAT should continue its Projects aiming at promotion of this mechanisms in the Region. However, as many KARAT's members work on eliminating violence against women (VAW), the focus on this issue should be strengthened (e.g. through organizing conference, in

cooperation with KARAT's partners having relevant expertise, aiming at building capacity on how to advocate for elimination of VAW within the framework and the use of CEDAW mechanisms). Members also concluded that there is a need for scaling up information sharing, especially through KARAT's website and communication channels (e.g. listserves) on developments in women's rights issues. The issue of monitoring women's human rights was also brought up and it was stated that KARAT should play an active role in building capacity of its membership, as well as providing tools for this kind of monitoring activities.

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Workshop: CEDAW & Women's Migrant Rights

The workshop "CEDAW & Women's Migrant Rights" took place within the framework of the WIDE Annual Conference "Migration in the context of globalization. Women's human rights at risk". It aimed at creating a forum for experience and information sharing and thus for building knowledge on how CEDAW can be used to protect women's migrant rights. The discussion was moderated by Plamenka Markova from Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation and co-facilitated by Aleksandra Solik from KARAT Coalition.

Plamenka Markova opened the meeting with a short presentation introducing CEDAW – its provisions and instruments that can be used in relation to migration. Then three presentations were given by the representatives of KARAT's members organizations who focused on the specific problems related to migration faced by women in their countries:

- Chinara Kartanbayeva from Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan presented the issue of internal migration of women in Kyrgyzstan in the context of access to social services and the civil rights.
- Kamila Dadashova from Azerbaijan Gender Association "Symmetry" focused on the problems faced by women who entered the cross-border marriages.
- Liliya Khamzaeva from organization "Future Generation" in Uzbekistan gave the overview of the pre-requisites and trends in human trafficking in Uzbekistan and discussed the recommended solutions to the problem.

Plamenka Markova commented on the possibility of using the CEDAW Convention in the cases raised by the speakers. After the discussion, Aleksandra Solik concluded that women's rights advocates should use the full potential of the CEDAW Convention - a "living document" which is constantly being adapted to the improving understanding of women's human rights. The CEDAW Committee is open to the information provided by the NGOs. Women's organizations should take advantage of this open approach and draw the Committee's attention to the areas of discrimination against women that they find important even if these areas haven't been recognized yet in the Convention. The problem of 'internal migration' that has been raised by Forum of Women's NGO of Kyrgyzstan is an example of such an issue.

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The exhibition „Through Their Eyes, Through Ours” in Bucharest

The exhibition „Through Their Eyes, Through Ours” has been presented during the WIDE Annual Conference "Migration in the context of globalization. Women's human rights at risk" and also during the General Assembly of KARAT Coalition in Bucharest, Romania. The events took place between the 3rd and the 7th of June. The exhibition is a part of the Project "Through Their

eyes, through Ours. Raising public awareness about development problems faced by women from developing countries in the EU Eastern Neighbourhood, Balkans and Central Asia" which is co-financed by European Commission. The photos have been selected in the international photo competition announced in the Region in 2008. The authors are the women-citizens of the presented countries.

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