

REMARKS OF KAREN NEWMAN*

It seems to me that the presentations have been enormously rich and that it would be preposterous to try to imagine how to synthesize what it is that we've heard today. But one essential fact, certainly to me, was that international organizations, unless they make an effort to really, really concentrate on the realities of women's lives, have to a great extent missed the point.

We have heard about the need to identify very clear quantifiable goals that we can really use as indicators to make us, as international organizations and also activists, in some way accountable to the women who we say that we speak for. We have also learned about the five obligations of governments that spring from the right to information. And I think those five obligations seem to be a very interesting way forward.

There was also a call for us to respond to grassroots realities, and to get women to recognize both their rights and instances of where their rights have been violated. But I was also very taken aback by the discussion of spousal consent, and the need to be very vigilant about how two steps forward can very quickly be three steps back if we don't remain vigilant on issues that we like to think are behind us, but in fact may well be ahead of us.

Something that I would like to say before closing is, as a representative from International Planned Parenthood's Europe region, that the intellectual leadership that this Conference is giving to human rights work is tremendously significant. And I hope that this is a coalition that—withstanding the difficulties of interdisciplinary work that we heard about this morning, notwithstanding the fact that it's not easy always to do it—finds a way to render these rights issues meaningful,

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comprehensible, and useful for the women who we say we work for. I think today and these two days are a very important part of that process.