Dear Ms Ploumen, Dear Honourable Member,

I would like to thank you and your co-signatories for your letter, in which you outline the stance you want the Commission to take on women’s reproductive rights during my mandate as President.

In my Political Guidelines for this new Commission, I have put the prevention of violence against women and the protection of victims at the heart of the Union’s equality policy for the next five years. Together with the Commissioner for Equality and the Commissioner for Justice, I will ensure that our policies strengthen the rights of women and girls to be protected from gender-based violence, including sexual violence and female genital mutilation, and that victims’ rights legislation is fully implemented at national level.

Women and girls should have their rights protected. Specifically in relation to female genital mutilation, I will continue to push for the implementation of the measures set out in the 2013 Commission Communication. I will ensure that the EU will use all available instruments to eradicate female genital mutilation and build on this experience to tackle other harmful practices.

Ms Lilianne Ploumen  
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We must also differentiate between sexual and reproductive rights, and sexual and reproductive health, in the sense of access to health services. As set out in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, access to sexual and reproductive health services remains a Member State competence and there is no agreement at EU level on the services to be provided.

The European Commission's task in this field is to provide full support to Member States' efforts in implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals relevant to women's health, universal access to sexual and reproductive care, family planning and education.

The Commission has always promoted access to integrated health services with the aim of contributing to the best possible health status of the citizens and I am committed to continue working in this direction.

Yours faithfully,

Ursula von der Leyen