Call to uphold the right of girls and women to access accurate information and comprehensive health services

Dear Ms. Dunja Mijatović,

As Members of Parliaments from across political parties, we wish to express our deep concern regarding matters related to the violation of fundamental human rights and gender discrimination.

We would like to draw your attention to the recent investigation of an independent global media platform openDemocracy, which revealed that crisis pregnancy centres (CPCs) have mushroomed around the world, including in Europe – becoming a global coordinated project of deliberate disinformation aiming to introduce additional obstacles for women who seek to terminate their pregnancy.

Crisis pregnancy centres are organisations that seek to stop women who might be considering abortion, often by providing misleading or inaccurate information and counselling. This results in denying women access to health care services and evidence-based and accurate information they are legally entitled to. The study revealed that these centres, often strongly religious-driven, particularly target women in vulnerable and precarious situations who may not have any other option.

In several countries, reporters found clear connections to ultra-conservative, religious and anti-abortion activists and networks. The findings also show that these pseudo-medical facilities are receiving growing funding and support from various governments including the US, Italy, Nigeria and Uganda.

Even though many strive to imitate professional medical services, these centres are often exempt from the regulatory, licensure, and credentialing oversight that health care facilities are usually obliged to undergo. Their propagation of misinformation should be regarded as an ethical violation that undermines women’s health and access to information.
We, the undersigned, stand by our promises and globally recognised policy instruments like the Sustainable Development Goals to protect and promote the right to health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. We are of the conviction that every woman, everywhere, regardless of location or situation, deserves the right to accurate information.

Despite the large-scale benefits that the realisation of sexual and reproductive health and rights brings for every individual and the community as a whole, these fundamental rights that also underpin the European consensus are challenged and threatened every day, everywhere, including in the European Union itself.

Your mandate as the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights comes at a decisive moment for human rights and human development.

The Council of Europe exercises tangible power over decisions influencing 47 Member States, and as a result, proper policy evaluation, monitoring and adjustment translate into benefits for millions of people living in Europe. We call on you to take firm action against the development of the unethical and harmful crisis pregnancy centres (CPCs). Your support and strong position can help fight disinformation and propaganda for the benefit of our citizens.

Yours sincerely,

SIGNATORIES - CURRENT MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENTS

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3. Hon., Chrysoula Zacharopoulou, MEP France
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