



ACTING ADMINISTRATOR BARSAS LETTER TO THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL

For Immediate Release

Friday, October 30, 2020

Office of Press Relations

The Honorable António Guterres
Secretary-General
United Nations
United Nations Headquarters
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

As the United Nations (UN) focuses on celebrating its legacy over the last 75 years, including as a champion of women for more than a quarter century, I write to reiterate the U.S. Government's call for "the [UN to] promote and fulfill an agenda that encourages meaningful contributions for women and their communities, and that has a positive and lasting impact for generations to come." I also want once again to raise concerns with the disconcerting trend that the UN supports and champions abortion, especially under the guise of the term "sexual and reproductive health."

As the world bears the impact of the pandemic of COVID-19, it is troubling that not only does the UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) continue to be a vehicle to advance a morally reprehensible pro-abortion agenda, but also that UN agencies and other subsidiary bodies continue to attack the pro-life laws and policies of sovereign Member States. A prime example is a joint letter, dated May 22, 2020, sent to the Ambassador of the United States to the European Office of the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva, the Honorable Andrew Bremberg, from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls; the Special Rapporteur on the Right of Everyone to the Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Health; and the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes, and Consequences. In this letter, the mandate-holders denounce the laws and policies of individual U.S. States, including Alabama, Arkansas, Iowa, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas.

The correspondence from the UN mandate-holders, **which I have attached**, is an affront to national sovereignty, as it criticizes the laws and policies of U.S. States while commending activist judicial rulings that expand access to abortion. Throughout the letter, the mandate-holders use interchangeably the terms, "abortion," "reproductive health services," "sexual and reproductive health services," and "sexual and reproductive rights." The message of the letter is loud and clear: The mandate-holders believe there is an international "right to abortion" and that sexual and reproductive health care is a vehicle for this "right." It is also clear that they view interfering in the national decision-making of Member States on this issue as part of their role, which sets an egregious precedent of anti-sovereignty, pro-abortion activism.

Moreover, the letter from the UN mandate-holders completely contradicts the one I received from you on this topic, dated June 1, 2020, **also attached**. In response to my concern about the proliferation throughout the GHRP of the term "sexual and reproductive health" and its derivatives (especially because of their link to a purported international "human right to abortion"), you wrote that the UN and its partners provide the health care described in the GHRP "with full respect for national laws." Further, you asserted that the Plan does not "promote, much less impose, abortion on anyone, nor is it intended to do so."

Unfortunately, the content of the letter transmitted by the Office of the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights flagrantly undermines both of these claims. The positions articulated by the mandate-holders prove that my concerns about the inclusion of such terms in the GHRP were fully justified. It is disappointing that the UN continues to contradict itself publicly on this issue. The fundamental problem at hand is that, despite claims to the contrary, including yours, the term "sexual and reproductive health" and its derivatives have become shorthand for abortion within the UN and other multilateral fora. One could explain away this trend as part of the aggressive promotion of a political agenda by some Member States; however, the UN's endorsement of this agenda demonstrates the organization's apparent lack of impartiality and objectivity.

Indeed, Article 2(7) of the UN Charter lays out the principle that "[n]othing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state." I thank you for reiterating your commitment to this bedrock principle. However, elements within the UN System clearly refuse to abide by the Charter and, by doing so, undermine the spirit of its intent—as demonstrated by the pro-abortion letter from the mandate-holders and the constant proliferation of pro-abortion rhetoric within the UN.

The United States is committed to advancing the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, as demonstrated by our historical financial and political support for the myriad activities of the organization and its subsidiary bodies. Nevertheless, as President Trump made clear over the past four years, the UN should not behave as an activist organization by interfering in the internal political deliberations of its Member States. President Trump declared that the “future belongs to patriots... to sovereign and independent nations who protect their citizens, respect their neighbors, and honor the differences that make each country special and unique.” As such, we cannot stand by and watch the UN attempt to dictate a politicized agenda that gravely threatens the dignity of the human person and the human rights of the unborn, while simultaneously trampling on the sovereignty of pro-life countries.

Mr. Secretary-General, I urge you to undertake a course-correction for the greater good of the UN—one that restores the UN’s respect for the principle enshrined in Article 2(7) of its Charter—and I welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters with you. Finally, I reiterate that the United States remains ready and willing to work together with you in the fight against the pandemic of COVID-19, and we welcome your steadfast support of our efforts to protect all life.

Sincerely,
John Barsa

ATTACHMENTS:

[Tab 1 - A-A Barsa letter to UN S-G Guterres](#)

[Tab 2 - Office of UNHCR letter transmitted to Ambassador Bremberg](#)

[Tab 3 - UN S-G Guterres response to A-A Barsa](#)

[Tab 4 - U.S. Response to UNCHR letter](#)

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Last updated: October 30, 2020

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