



Dr. Grégor Puppink
Director

Strasbourg, July 20, 2020

Excellency,

Our Non-Governmental Organization, the *European Centre for Law and Justice*, and our global affiliate members would like to express their deep concern about the withdrawal of the draft agreement regarding the Covid-19 responses debated during the June session of the UN Commission on Population and Development.

As you know, the Covid-19 pandemic and the measures that have been taken to fight it have had dramatic effects in many countries. Currently, one of the most worrying consequences is a growing food crisis, which is causing severe malnutrition, especially in developing countries.

This is a crucial situation, and one in which the UN can make a difference, especially the UN Commission on Population and Development. It is imperative that countries come together to act on a fundamental and consensual issue: providing food to those who are starving.

Yet, alarmingly, these negotiations failed because the Presiding Chair delegation and many European countries insisted on including “sexual and reproductive rights” inside the draft agreement.

Excellency, the decision, and indeed demand, of some countries to place such controversial wording in texts, which should otherwise be wholly supported by all countries, is regrettable and tragic.

It is regrettable because the cornerstone of international law is national sovereignty. States freely accept or not to be a party to a Convention. To impose abortion on a State that has never signed a treaty guaranteeing such provision is to violate its sovereignty. And to pressure a State to implement a legal provision as a condition to direly needed humanitarian aid amounts to blackmailing.

It is tragic, because the outcome of such negotiations, which are used by some to promote an agenda, have direct consequences on the lives of millions of people who are counting on international assistance to survive. As one example, on July 10, the U.N. news agency posted an article outlining the severe food crisis Yemen is currently facing. According to the report, “two million children require treatment for acute malnutrition ‘of which around 360,000 are at risk of dying without treatment.’”

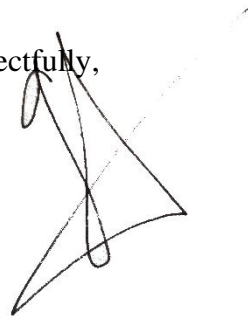
People in Yemen and in other countries where the Covid-19 quarantine had major negative effects truly do need quick, effective, and fundamental assistance. They do need food, not a plethora of “sexual and reproductive rights”, which are merely the code name of “contraception and abortion.”

Excellency, the *European Centre for Law and Justice* respectfully invites you to convince Member States of the UNFPA to accommodate the very legitimate request of some countries: do not include in draft agreements controversial provisions which are not part of international law. Specifically, remove any language related to abortion and sexual and reproductive rights.

Ultimately, everyone should realize that the UN credibility is at stake. If proper aid and basic needs are not successfully provided for when so clearly needed, and instead, another agenda – such as abortion – is promoted under the guise of the UN, the world’s nations will increasingly contest the United Nations’ system itself.

The *European Centre for Law and Justice* remains committed to defending human rights as enshrined in international covenant and freely accepted by States and, to that end, we remain at your disposal.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.A faint, circular stamp or seal, likely a watermark or official seal, located below the signature. It contains text that is difficult to read but appears to be related to the European Centre for Law and Justice.