

Brussels, 18 April 2018

To: Mr. Thorbjorn Jagland  
Secretary General of the Council of Europe  
Avenue de l'Europe  
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex



**Istanbul Convention: We achieved a lot together and we will not stop there!**

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

On behalf of the hundreds of millions of citizens, and in particular, women and girls, represented through our nine European umbrella civil society organisations, we are writing to you to thank the Council of Europe for its great work and achievements in relation to preventing and fighting against gender-based violence.

When the Convention was negotiated a decade ago, its scope and some of the concepts used were subjected to harsh debates. In addition, a few Member States were opposing the definition of gender and the scope of the non-discrimination article.

At the time, the Council of Europe managed to overcome this opposition and the Convention was successfully adopted. Following its 10<sup>th</sup> ratification, it entered into force in 2014. It is now ratified by 29 Member States.

A number of governments are currently looking at ratifying the Convention and in some cases, this process is used by some ultra-conservative groups as an opportunity to spread false information about the Convention. This is in particular the

case in Croatia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Latvia. In addition, anti-choice NGOs and organisations opposing gender equality and the fundamental rights of LGBTI people have recently addressed you with a letter asking for the Convention to be amended. By demanding that “gender” is replaced by “equality between women and men”, what they aim at is actually primarily to undermine women’s rights and gender equality.

We indeed believe that the Istanbul Convention can bring change and have a real impact on the lives of women and girls in Europe.

We have no doubt that you will continue to demonstrate leadership towards protecting all women from gender-based violence and to encourage all the Council of Europe Member States to ratify the Convention and to fully implement it.

We look forward to continue working with you towards a continent free from gender-based violence where all women feel safe and empowered.

Yours sincerely,

The undersigned organisations:

- Amnesty International
- Center for Reproductive Rights
- The European Humanist Federation
- ILGA-Europe - the European region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association
- The European Women’s Lobby
- The International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network
- Organisation Intersex International Europe
- The Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants
- Transgender Europe

cc: Michele Nicoletti, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Dunja Mijatović, Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights, Feride Acar, President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, and Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director General of DG Democracy.