

The President

Ms Gea Meijers
Coordinator WIDE+

D 307897 08.07.2022

By email

Dear Ms Meijers,

Thank you for your letter in which you list your network's recommendations on the cause of women in Europe, whose situation is even more worrying in the context of war in Ukraine.

The European Parliament has always been a sounding board for women's rights. It calls notably for strong and appropriate responses to the needs of women and minorities in the tragic invasion of Ukraine.

Last month, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the impact of the war against Ukraine on women¹ where it shared many of your concerns. By using its strong political voice, the European Parliament is a key player in the dialogue with Member States to defend the equal rights of all women in Europe. Deploring that many women have seen their condition deteriorate due to the lack of proper psychological and health care, this House has consistently called upon Member States to set up support programmes and to offer access to sexual and reproductive health services.

Crossing the border does not protect these women from crimes against human dignity and many offenders of our values see the conflict at our doorstep as a new opportunity to traffic women and children, mostly for sexual exploitation. The European Parliament expressed outrage and a prompt reaction to the increasing reports of trafficking. Recognising that the three words to combat trafficking in human beings are *awareness raising*, *registration* and *accessibility*, we strongly call for additional investments to set up an EU-wide helpline for refugees who are trafficked or at risk of trafficking. Under the existing anti-trafficking legislation, this House relays the recommendations of the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, on the need to register entities providing shelter and transport to refugees in order to mitigate the risk of trafficking.

Most recently, the Committee on Gender Equality of the European Parliament sent a delegation to The Hague to learn more on what is being done to prevent and combat human trafficking at national, European and worldwide level. The attention of the European Parliament on Anti-Trafficking in Human Beings measures shows a fierce will to defend a very informed position in the measures to be presented by the European Commission in the framework of its EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2021-2025).

¹ Text adopted, P9_TA(2022)0206.

When human dignity and our values are at stake, our European sense of justice must be promoted abroad. With the strongest determination to give justice its full meaning, the European Parliament passed a resolution last May to fight against impunity for war crimes in Ukraine. This institution has therefore recognised the key role of the International Criminal Court to investigate and pursue the perpetrators of war crimes in the context of the war in Ukraine, especially where sexual violence is used as a weapon of war. In doing so, the European Parliament has called for the Commission, the Member States and the international community to provide the ICC adequate technical and financial resources for the collection and storage of evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

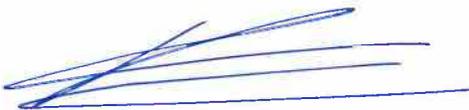
The war in Ukraine shows more than ever the continuity between our domestic and foreign policies. With regard to our external action, the European Parliament is particularly alert and determined to promote gender equality. Fifteen days after the start of the war in Ukraine, it has adopted its resolution on EU Gender Action Plan III issued by the Commission² where Members stressed the need to promote a safe environment for women human rights defenders, notably in conflict areas.

As President of the European Parliament, I am conscious that the institutions of the European Union must show all decision-makers in the Member States and abroad, a gender-sensitive political and legislative path. In this respect, the European Parliament is a pioneering institution. In 2019, a provision was inserted in the Rules of Procedure, which aims at providing a gender-mainstreaming perspective in all Parliament's activities. Later in 2020, the European Parliament passed a resolution³ where it called for a recurrent training gender mainstreaming for all middle and upper managers in the EEAS, the EU diplomatic services and the Heads or Commanders of CSDP missions and operations. It also insisted that the composition of the staff should be equal between women and men. The European Parliament is more committed than ever to supporting gender sensitive-diplomacy and this is what we did by bringing the voice of our citizens to Kiev on 1 April.

The European Parliament strongly agrees that there can be no promotion of peace, nor peace building, without taking gender-equality into account both in the short and long term measures to respond to conflict situations.

Rest assured that this House will support those who defend the cause of women to pursue efforts for more social justice and promote the reduction of gender inequalities in our societies.

Yours sincerely,



Roberta Metsola

² Text adopted, P9_TA(2022)0073.

³ Text adopted, P9_TA(2020)0286.