

23 March 2015

To the Right Honourable Dr. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany

Dear Chancellor Merkel,

2015 marks the 20th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995.

In connection with the United Nations Commission on the Status on Women and the commemoration of the Beijing Platform for Action, hundreds of organisations working for the promotion and protection of equality for women are in New York to assess and discuss the progress made for women and girls' rights in the past 20 years.

Among the challenges to equality for women are many forms of discrimination against women, their poverty and their sexual exploitation which underpins their lack of status and opportunities worldwide.

It is in this context that we ask you to ensure that Germany will finally ratify the UN human rights Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others. This Convention was approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 317 (IV) of 2 December 1949 and entered into force on 25 July 1951. Its ratification by Germany is long overdue.

We would also like to draw your attention to the *European Parliament Resolution of 26 February 2014 on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality* which, in its very first article *"recognises that prostitution, forced prostitution and sexual exploitation are highly gendered issues and violations of human dignity, contrary to human rights principles, among which gender equality, and therefore contrary to the principles of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, including the goal and the principle of gender equality"*.

In addition, we respectfully ask that you to take into consideration the Resolution "Prostitution, trafficking and modern slavery in Europe," adopted on the 8th of April 2014 by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and in particular its explicit recommendation for States to *"consider criminalising the purchase of sexual services, based on the Swedish model, as the most effective tool for preventing and combating trafficking in human beings"*.

Finally, we ask you to honour, support and reliably and responsibly implement the

- "Report of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities." from 6 March 1991
- UN Resolution 40/103 "Prevention of Prostitution" passed on 13 December 1985
- UN Economic and Social Council resolutions 1988/34 of 27 May 1988
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly

- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (“Palermo Protocol”)

Seeing these international human rights agreements honoured in a country as rich and important as Germany is a vital step for women’s rights to a safe and free and equal life. A disregard of these basic principles by a country like Germany sets a sad example worldwide.

The world is watching whether Germany will reverse its legislation that, according to your own official country reports, has had “hardly any measureable positive impact” on the lives of women in prostitution nor reduced the criminal trafficking of women into the sex industry.”

We therefore call on you as one of the most influential and important leaders in the world, to place the promotion of women’s rights, guaranteed by internationally binding laws and conventions, at the top of your agenda.

We thank you, Chancellor Merkel, for your careful consideration to these urgent matters.

Sincerely yours,

Kathleen Barry, Ph.D.
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