



# **Parliamentary Network for Critical Issues**

**2019**

**End of Year Report**

## **PNCI**

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The Parliamentary Network for Critical Issues (PNCI) networked with elected, religious, and pro-life leaders around the world to advance respect for life in law and policy.

We alerted our network to country specific pro-abortion challenges we identified by monitoring pro-abortion websites and social media.

Through the [PNCI website](#), newsletters, and emails PNCI helped keep the network informed of global actions affecting abortion and facilitated exchange of strategies.

PNCI tracked actions promoting the violence of abortion at the UN, OAS and African Union and informed our network and members of the various regional pro-life google groups we belong to including for the UN, for Europe, for Africa and for Latin America and the Caribbean comprised of legislators, staff, clergy, and pro-life leaders.

PNCI collaborated with the Forum for Catholic-inspired NGOs (CINGO) and PNCI director, Marie Smith, co-chaired the human rights group. PNCI worked with Priests for Life on pro-life advocacy efforts at the UN.

#### **I. Information Sharing**

PNCI tracked news outlets and websites for the latest news, events, and tactics affecting global respect for life from conception to natural death and shared that information with the PNCI network through updated posts on the PNCI website, the monthly PNCI newsletter, the daily news clips, social media and emails.

In the monthly newsletter, PNCI compiles the latest news and events related to critical life issues taking place at international and regional bodies and in countries around the world. It shared actions by the US and other governments supporting respect for life and pro-life statements given by Pope Francis and by the Holy See at the United Nations.

The actions of legislators, executives and judicial bodies around the world on life issues were also included in the monthly PNCI newsletter which sought to be a source of information, inspiration, and encouragement to those sharing the goal of advancing laws and policies that respect the innate dignity of life. The monthly PNCI newsletter was recognized as a reputable source of information.

**Samples from PNCI's 2019 newsletters:**

### **U.S. Opposes Promotion of Abortion at UNFPA Meeting**

The U.S. delegation to UNFPA's Nairobi Summit on ICPD 25-marking the 25th anniversary of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)-led opposition to [efforts to use the contentious meeting](#) to advance access to abortion as an international right. In a [joint statement](#) on behalf of the U.S., Brazil, Belarus, Egypt, Haiti, Hungary, Libya, Poland, Senegal, St. Lucia, and Uganda, Valerie Huber, head of the U.S. delegation and Special Representative for Global Women's Health in the Office of Global Affairs at the US Department of Health and Human Services expressed the concerns of the countries, especially in regard to "the content of some of the key priorities of this Summit." (Continues)

### **Christian, Jewish and Muslim Leaders Unite Against Euthanasia**

A [position paper](#) signed by Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders states the three religions' opposition to euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide. The declaration, which was presented to Pope Francis, states that the three religions "oppose any form of euthanasia - that is the direct, deliberate and intentional act of taking life - as well as physician assisted suicide - that is the direct, deliberate and intentional support of committing suicide - because they fundamentally contradict the inalienable value of human life, and therefore are inherently and consequentially morally and religiously wrong, and should be forbidden without exceptions." (Continues)

### **Time Running Out for Unborn Children in Northern Ireland**

The final countdown for the political parties in Northern Ireland (NI) to re-establish an Executive government and follow legislative procedure to determine any changes to the law on abortion expires in a few days. If no power-sharing Executive is functioning by Monday October 21 the abortion regime passed by MPs in the United Kingdom will be imposed on unborn children in NI allowing their death until the 7<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy. (Continues)

### **President Trump Calls for Protection of All with Down Syndrome**

This October, President Donald Trump commemorated [Down Syndrome Awareness Month](#) calling for the protection of all persons with Down syndrome, including the unborn. *"This month is an important opportunity for Americans to reaffirm our commitment to creating a society that better appreciates and respects the dignity of life at all of its beautiful and miraculous stages. We must devote our efforts to ensure that the United States continues to exhibit reverence for human life-both born and unborn,"* said President Trump in a statement. (Continues)

### **United States and Holy See Defend the Unborn at the UN**

The United Nations General Assembly (GA) began a new session in New York with a large number of heads of state, including President Donald Trump, diplomats and country delegations in attendance. In [unprecedented remarks](#), President Trump told the GA, "Like many nations here today, we in America believe that every child - born and unborn - is a sacred gift from God." (Continues)

### **Australia: Thousands March for Babies in Victoria**

Thousands of pro-lifers marched in Victoria for the 10th annual [March for the Babies](#), marking ten years of liberal abortion on demand in the province. Victoria legalized abortion in October 2008, when it passed what organizers call the most extreme abortion law in the world. Pro-life leaders encouraged marchers to stand up for life despite the bullying, intimidation and backlash they may receive as several other pro-life groups already have. "I can't guarantee that it won't happen to

you, but I can guarantee that it is worth it," said Rebecca Gosper with Life Choice Australia. (Continues)

## II. Monitoring pro-abortion tactics and plans

PNCI monitored news outlets and pro-abortion NGO websites in order to uncover pro-abortion plans and develop counter measures and strategies with members of the network through personal and group emails. These findings are also shared in the newsletter. Sample postings on the PNCI website include the following:

### **Pro-Abortion Cohorts Form New Alliance to Expand Abortion Globally**

Five leading pro-abortion organizations have formed a new alliance and created a digital platform on abortion access in response to what they describe as "growing opposition to reproductive rights". International Planned Parenthood Federation, Ipas, Marie Stopes International, Population Services International, and Safe Abortion Action Fund have united in creation of the "*first digital platform of its kind, working to eliminate unsafe abortion by putting evidence-based guidance in the hands of frontline practitioners and policy makers*" with the goal of advancing access to abortion around the world. Their planned efforts include seeking to clarify the legal status of abortion in countries and helping train health workers in abortion. (Continues)

### **Pro-abortion Rally Cry: "Push Back"**

Pro-abortion NGOs, along with pro-abortion activists serving in key positions, have been following a 'battle cry' to "push back" against what they describe as 'regression' in support and funding for abortion. The main source for their ire is the Trump administration's pro-life belief in the sanctity of life from the moment of conception and its commitment to advancing life-affirming policies through its foreign aid and at the United Nations (UN). (Continues)

### **Pro-Abortion "Blueprint" Includes Legalizing Self-Induced Abortion**

Pro-abortion NGOs and key supporters in the United States (US) and in the European Union (EU) have compiled their wish lists of extreme policies on abortion. In the US, a coalition of 80 organizations including PPFA, Center for Reproductive Rights, ACLU, Ipas, and Catholics for Choice are looking to the 2020 elections and hoping that Democrats will win control of the White House and Congress in order to advance their [Blueprint for Sexual and Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice](#) in order to "correct the backtracking that has taken place in recent years." (Cont.)

## III. Networking and collaboration to stop advance of abortion

PNCI networked internationally with legislators, staff, clergy, and pro-life leaders from select countries and regions of the world through meetings, google groups, and personal contact. PNCI maintained close collaboration with key individuals in our global network. See ANNEX for details.

## **IV. Pro-Life Advocacy at the United Nations**

The Parliamentary Network for Critical Issues (PNCI) collaborated with Priests for Life (PFL) in its pro-life advocacy at the United Nations (UN) to promote the dignity of every life from conception to natural death and to network with like-minded organizations and country delegations to UN meetings.

PNCI's Director, Marie Smith, composed statements for PFL which were submitted for meetings taking place in 2020. Through these statements, PFL expressed the need to protect children in the womb and their mothers from the violence of abortion.

Submissions included the following sample texts:

### **53rd Commission on Population and Development Priority theme: Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development**

Priests for Life welcomes the attention of the 53rd Commission on Population and Development to the critical role of food security and nutrition in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We believe that the world we want for 2030 is one in which every human life is valued for her or his innate worth and recognizes that human dignity is the foundation of policies that liberate countries and, most importantly, people from poverty.

Priests for Life strongly believes that the elimination of malnutrition during the first 1,000 days of life, and the provision of nutrition for all women and adolescents of child-bearing age, will not only save the lives of women and children and contribute to their well-being, but will improve the economies of countries. Healthy individuals and families are equipped with the stamina necessary for productive and sustainable agriculture, to attend school, to receive training in job skills, to enjoy improved health and well-being, and are better able to resist illness and disease.

When women of child-bearing age are well-nourished, they are healthier and better able to provide nourishment for the child in the womb when they conceive, and to make nutritious food choices for their child under age two; all essential to ensuring healthy physical and cognitive development. When children thrive, they are empowered to reach their potential, to go to school and become healthy adults who are better equipped to make meaningful contributions to their families, society, and country.

### **58<sup>th</sup> Session: Commission for Social Development Theme: Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness**

The need for adequate housing affects most countries around the world universally impacting the same fragile groups that are most affected by homelessness including the disabled, the elderly, and families headed by women. Women are too often forced to flee their homes with their children because of domestic violence, the leading cause of homelessness for women and children.

Vulnerable groups most excluded from housing are urgently in need of social protection policies if the goal of Agenda 2030 to leave no one behind is to be achieved. These groups span the life cycle beginning with the child, who as the Convention on the Rights of the Child reminds us needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth, the disabled, and the elderly.

Social protection systems to address homelessness ought to be founded on respect for human dignity and the innate right to life from conception to natural death without exception. This includes unborn children identified as having a physical impairment, disabled individuals, the sick and elderly, all of whom are in need of social protection systems that address their unique housing needs.

### **Commission on the Status of Women 64<sup>th</sup> session, Beijing+25**

Priests for Life is concerned that 25 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women girls are still losing their lives through prenatal sex selection. While the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action acknowledged that discrimination and violence against girls begin at the earliest stages of life and that prenatal sex selection is not only an act of violence against women but violence against the girl child in the womb, the practice continues resulting in millions of missing women and girls.

The Beijing Platform called on governments to enact and enforce legislation protecting girls from all forms of violence including female infanticide and prenatal sex selection, and to eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child and the root causes of son preference. It recognized that the result of male child preference is harmful and unethical practices such as prenatal sex selection and female infanticide. In addition, it recognized that sex selection abortion is compounded by the use of technologies that determine whether or not the unborn child is a girl followed by her death in abortion.

Mounting evidence demonstrates that countries with the highest distorted sex ratios at birth have a shortage of women which is leading to increases in acts of violence, kidnappings, rapes, sex trafficking and prostitution, bride-selling, forced marriage, and child marriage as these countries struggle with unprecedented demographic challenges precipitated by significant numbers of missing women.

The increase in sex trafficking and other acts of violence against women and girls, especially in countries in Asia, appears linked to high rates of sex selection abortion of unborn infant girls suggesting that violence against girls in the womb leads to increased violence against women and girls.

### **Human Rights Council (HRC) review of the United States**

PNCI composed a submission for PFL to the Human Rights Council (HRC) which will review the United States during the Third Cycle of the 36<sup>th</sup> session (April-May 2020). The HRC is composed of UN Member States with a number of

known pro-abortion countries which pressure nations with pro-life laws and policies with recommendations to increase access to abortion.

Among other points in the submission, PFL stated that it supports the work of the U.S. that seeks to counter the reinterpretation of international law advancing a so-called international right to abortion, to fund life-affirming health care in its foreign aid, to protect the right of sovereign nations and US states to determine laws on abortion, and to reduce the number of lives lost through abortion. [Read the full submission here.](#)

The statement expressed PFL's affirmation that US foreign aid is providing life-affirming health care to reduce maternal and newborn mortality and stillbirth while providing for the needs of pregnant women and their children so they not only survive pregnancy and childbirth but thrive. It also expressed support for USAID'S Healthy Beginnings program that is working effectively to provide women of child-bearing age with the health care, nutrition and supplements they need to ensure maternal and child health during the critical first 1000 days of life from conception to the second birthday in order to prevent malnutrition and reduce disease.

Given the increased pro—abortion activism from members of the HRC it is expected that the US will be criticized for its domestic and foreign pro-life policies. As an example, during the 2019 session, Italy was by HRC Member Uruguay that it must "Ensure the free exercise of women's sexual and reproductive rights, by ensuring access to legal services for interruption of pregnancy, minimizing the impact of conscientious objections in the exercise of this human right". France told Italy to take "the necessary measures to ensure effective access to abortion."