



# **Parliamentary Network for Critical Issues**

**2020**

**End of Year Report**



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### **Summary**

In 2020, the Parliamentary Network for Critical Issues (PNCI) networked with key individuals working in governments, parliamentarians and staff, leaders of like-minded organizations, and religious leaders to advance a culture of life and respect for life in law and policy around the world and at the United Nations.

PNCI monitored pro-abortion websites and social media for pro-abortion activities and alerted its partners, including coalitions for the United Nations (UN), Europe, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean—to specific challenges.

Through the PNCI website, [www.PNCIUS.org](http://www.PNCIUS.org), newsletter, and personal emails, PNCI helped keep its network informed of global actions affecting abortion and helped facilitate exchange of information and strategies. COVID-19 led to actions affecting the culture of life, especially in regards to abortion and euthanasia.

PNCI worked with Bob Lalonde, Priests for Life's International Director, on pro-life advocacy efforts at the UN and to obtain civil society status at the Organization of American States (OAS). PNCI also participated in discussions with the Forum for Catholic-inspired NGOs (CINGO).

### **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 daily shared that information with a select list of strategic partners and, at times, via email to individuals and/or the larger groups.

It shared opportunities for pro-life NGOs to show their support for country specific pro-life legislation and responded to requests for assistance from individuals and other NGOs.

Through its monthly newsletter, PNCI shared pro-life actions taken by President Trump and the Trump administration that advanced respect for life at the UN and around the world. PNCI shared statements against abortion 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 PNCI's newsletters which were recognized as a reputable source of information.

## **II. Monitoring pro-abortion tactics and plans**

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic led to unprecedented attempts to advance access to abortion as part of “essential healthcare”, as “reproductive health”, or as “reproductive health for humanitarian settings” at the UN, the OAS, and around the world.

PNCI monitored 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. The push, using the pandemic as an excuse, to lessen or remove restrictions on women’s and adolescents’ access to abortion-inducing drugs for so-called DIY (do it yourself) abortion was a major global pro-abortion tactic as were attempts to broaden access to abortion by expanding gestational limits.

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

PNCI networked domestically and internationally with government officials, legislators, staff, and pro-life leaders from select countries and regions of the world and maintained close collaboration with key individuals in its global network. PNCI networks and collaborates in ways that are most effective when kept confidential.

## **IV. Pro-Life Advocacy with the U.S. Government**

PNCI participated in group and private pro-life phone calls including about the planned Global Women’s Health Summit which was to be held by the US before the World Health Assembly in Geneva but had to be canceled due to COVID-19.

PNCI promoted to its network the Trump administration’s Geneva Consensus Declaration, signed by 33 countries, described as *“a historic document that further strengthens an ongoing coalition to achieve better health for women, the preservation of human life, support for the family as foundational to a healthy society, and the protection of national sovereignty in global politics”*.

PNCI responded to USAID’s open comments period for “2020 Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Policy” with a statement that expressed concern over gender-based violence and its beginnings in the prenatal stage when baby girls in the womb are identified and killed in sex-selection abortion; concern over the 2.6 million stillbirths that occur globally each year; and on the need to provide adequate nutrition during the first 1,000 days of an individual’s life, from conception to the second birthday for healthy physical and cognitive development.

PNCI informed members of its network of the U.S. Department of State’s open comment period on the report by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s Commission on Inalienable Rights which affirms freedom of religion and warns of

the dangers of the rapid expansion of what are considered to be human rights by different U.N. agencies and regional human rights systems.

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

PNCI collaborated with PFL in its pro-life advocacy at the UN to promote the dignity of every life from conception to natural death and networked with like-minded organizations and country delegates. PNCI notified its network about UN submission opportunities.

PNCI's Director, Marie Smith, composed statements for PFL which were submitted for meetings taking place in 2021. Through these statements, PFL expressed the need to protect children in the womb and their mothers from the violence of abortion, especially in the case of sex selection abortion.

Submissions:

65<sup>th</sup> Commission on Status of Women—Priority theme: *Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls*

PFL statement included:

- Priests for Life believes that the elimination of violence against women and girls for achieving gender equality and empowerment must be consistent throughout a girl's life beginning at the earliest stage.
- The Beijing Platform for Action recognized prenatal sex selection as a severe form of discrimination and violence against girls that begins at the earliest stages of life and continues unabated throughout their lives. The Beijing Platform specified that prenatal sex selection is not only an act of violence against women but is violence against the girl child in the womb. Furthermore, it called on governments to eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls and the root causes of son preference. It recognized that discrimination against girls and boy child preference are harmful and result in unethical practices such as prenatal sex selection and female infanticide.
- Yet, prenatal sex selection continues without a concerted effort to stop it. At times failure to act is related to cultural son preference and at times it is related to the abortion agenda which opposes restrictions on abortion for any reason, including those based on the sex of the child.
- Failure to protect girls in law from prenatal sex selection as recommended to governments in paragraph 283d of the Platform, "Enact and enforce legislation protecting girls from all forms of violence, including female

infanticide and prenatal sex selection”, begins the devaluation which perpetuates throughout the life cycle and renders the worth of a girl contingent upon subjective views of wantedness and utility. The girl child becomes a commodity, devoid of innate dignity and value, significantly impacting equality and empowerment while leading to increased violence against women and girls.

- Priests for Life calls on the Commission for the Status of Women to urgently act to end prenatal sex selection abortion recognized in the Beijing Platform for Action as an unethical act of violence and discrimination against women and girls that begins the cycle of violence that impacts women and girls throughout their lives.

54th Commission on Population and Development (CPD)--Special theme *Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development*

PFL statement included:

- Priests for Life welcomes the attention of the 54th 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 being 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.
- The Programme of Action not only called upon governments to work to stop the practice of prenatal sex selection which leads to the death of millions of girls but warned that son preference also impacts the access of girl children to food. It called upon governments to promote equal treatment of girls and boys, including access to nutrition.
- Priests for Life supports programs and policies, along with the requisite funding, that seek to provide food security and nutrition, including micronutrients, for pregnant women and lactating mothers during the first 1000 days of life from conception to the second birthday and for all women and adolescents of reproductive age.
- 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.

## **VI. Cooperation with the Forum for Catholic-Inspired NGOs (CINGO)**

PNCI Director Marie Smith participated in discussions of the human rights working group of the Forum for Catholic-Inspired NGOs (CINGO) on a post pandemic world. She expressed concern about attempts at the UN and globally to use the pandemic as an excuse to expand access to abortion, especially through the use of telemedicine and abortion-inducing drugs as well as the push for euthanasia. She urged the NGOs to give greater attention to these efforts and to work together opposing such actions.

Mrs. Smith submitted concerns about the negative impact a pro-abortion Biden-Harris administration will have at the UN and on funding for, and promotion of, abortion around the world with potential impact on Catholic health care providers. She also submitted recommendations suggesting possible communication methods that the Forum could follow.