

ANNEX

Priests for Life's submissions to the United Nations 2023 for meetings taking place in 2024

Commission for Social Development
62nd session
February 5- 14, 2024

Priority Theme

Fostering social development and social justice through social policies to accelerate progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieve the overarching goal of poverty eradication

Priests for Life acknowledges the urgent need to eradicate poverty and to implement programs and policies that will directly benefit all people, today and in the future, and ensure that no one is left behind.

Priests for Life (PFL) believes that policies to foster social development and social justice to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieve the overarching goal of poverty eradication must ensure that all human beings can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment as declared in Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Priests for Life advocates for social policies that leave no one behind, that respect human dignity and uphold the well-being, dignity, and worth of all, every human life without exception. Social policies form the foundation to eradicate poverty and liberate the 700 million people around the world who live in extreme poverty today.

Priests for Life believes that eradication of poverty must be achieved through actions which do not violate the innate human dignity of others, especially the right to life of girls and boys alive in the womb but not yet born.

Everyone must be included in efforts for poverty eradication and sustainable development. All individuals have the potential to make significant contributions to eradicating poverty; no life is expendable.

Every human life needs to be valued for her or his innate worth and no member of the human family should be stripped of their innate human dignity and denied their most basic right, the right to life, through policies that allow individuals to be marginalized and treated as a problem. Their demise should not ever be considered an acceptable strategy for poverty eradication. The dignity of life needs to be acknowledged and protected throughout the life cycle, from conception to natural death, especially when the vulnerable human being is disabled, elderly or residing in the womb.

Population control, family planning, and reproductive health programs that target the elimination of children through abortion discriminate against children in the womb, and conflict with the Preamble of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which reminds us that the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth. A majority of Member States restricts access to abortion with laws providing varied prenatal legal protection to children.

Mother Teresa, now St. Theresa of Calcutta, when accepting her Nobel Peace Prize spoke about poverty and said she considered the nations who have legalized abortion as being the poorest nations. She explained that they are afraid of the little one, they are afraid of the unborn child, and that the child must die because these countries don't want to feed one more child, to educate one more child.

Poverty eradication requires health care that respects human dignity during all stages of life. Renewed efforts to reduce newborn and maternal mortality are essential including ensuring the presence of skilled childbirth attendants who recognize obstetric emergencies and help women receive critical emergency obstetric care and treatment. Complications from childbirth including hemorrhage, the number one cause of maternal death, must continue to be prevented and treated and mothers provided with essential clean blood transfusions and antibiotics when needed.

The alleviation of hunger and malnutrition as stated in Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger, End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, is one of the most critical ways to alleviate poverty.

Malnutrition impedes progress and affects the economic potential of families, communities and countries especially when associated with stunted growth. Malnutrition results in the stunted growth of 165 million children resulting in impaired physical and cognitive development with lasting detriment to the individual and to the economic health of countries.

The elimination of malnutrition during the first 1,000 days of life for a child, from conception to the second birthday, and the provision of nutrition for all women 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 and contribute to the eradication of poverty.

When children thrive, they are empowered to become healthy adults who are better equipped to make meaningful economic contributions to their families, society, and country. Healthy individuals and families are equipped with the stamina necessary for productive and sustainable employment, to attend school, to receive training in job skills, to enjoy improved health and well-being, and are better enabled to resist illness and disease. All contributing to the eradication of poverty.

As the 30th anniversary of the International Year of the Family is celebrated the family must be protected and enabled to function as the core foundation of society critical to poverty eradication and sustained development. Cultures throughout the world recognize the essential role of the family in providing for the basic needs of food, water, shelter, clothing, love, and care. The family, in turn, provides for the very survival of its culture and country and must be protected and assisted in all policies and programs to eradicate poverty.

Priests for Life believes that no individual member of the family ought to be selectively marked as expendable— regardless of disability, disease, age, condition of dependency or stage of development. All members of the family are deserving of protection, including those that have been classified as expendable by some and excluded from basic social protection. No member of the family ought to be stripped of their human dignity and denied their most basic right—the right to life. Life is not just for the privileged, the perfect and the planned but extends to all members of the human family.

Pope Francis in his address to the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 called for respect of all lives. He said that the common home of all men and women must continue to rise on the foundations of a right understanding of universal fraternity and respect for the sacredness of every human life, of every man and every woman, the poor, the elderly, children, the infirm, the unborn, the unemployed, the abandoned, and those considered disposable because they are only considered as part of a statistic.

Priests for Life concurs that our common home rises on the foundations that understand universal fraternity and respect for the sacredness of every human life. We believe that social policies for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achievement of the eradication of poverty need to affirm the well-being, dignity and worth of all, every human life without exception, and ensure that no one was left behind and no life was considered disposable.

**Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-eight Session
March 11-22, 2024**

Priority theme: Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.

Priests for Life, in its submission to the 68th Commission on the Status of Women, believes in advancing the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls through actions which do not violate the innate human dignity of others, especially the right to life of girls and boys alive in the womb but not yet born.

Priests for Life recalls the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which recognized that women's empowerment and equality begin at the earliest stages of life and that girls will only be truly empowered when they are not targeted for death once identified in the womb as female.

As the Commission on the Status of Women considers accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective, Priests for Life cautions that if gender-biased sex selection continues unabated, actions to achieve gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls will be undermined by this unjust discriminatory practice that denies a girl her very right to be born.

In order to eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action called for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against the girl child and the root causes of son preference, which result in harmful and unethical practices including prenatal sex selection and infanticide.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action sought greater recognition of the human dignity and worth of young girls to assure their full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It specifically called on governments to enact and enforce legislation protecting girls from all forms of violence, including sex selective abortion.

It urged governments to give priority to developing programs and policies that foster norms and attitudes of zero tolerance for harmful and discriminatory attitudes, including son preference, which results in harmful and unethical practices including prenatal sex selection.

It expressed grave concern that discrimination against women and girls begins at the earliest stages of life and that son preference curtails the access of girls to food, education and health care and even life itself.

Priests for Life warns that son preference discrimination not only denies a girl child her right to life, but impedes empowerment and equality throughout life. This first act of sex discrimination and gender-based violence needs to be eliminated if equality and empowerment is to truly be achieved for all women and girls.

The long-term result of gender-biased abortion—skewed birth ratios—grossly undermine women's empowerment and equality and result in tens of millions of missing women and girls. The resulting imbalance of more men than women negatively impacts women and girls who suffer increased violence and abuse as they are kidnapped, forced into sex trafficking and prostitution, bought and sold as brides, and forced into child marriage. Without concerted action to eliminate this deadly and unjust harmful practice, it is expected that the number of missing women and girls will continue to increase in the years ahead.

PFL cautions that any and all actions toward achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls are weakened by the underlying discrimination and violence against girls that begins at the earliest stages of life.

Priests for Life urges the Commission on the Status of Women to strongly voice opposition to the harmful practice of sex-selective abortion and work for its elimination so all women and girls have the opportunity for equality and empowerment.

Evidence demonstrates that women in countries with the highest distorted sex ratios at birth suffer from increased acts of violence and abuse, kidnappings, rapes, sex trafficking and prostitution, bride-selling, forced marriage, and child marriage as these countries struggle with the harmful consequences of missing women.

Tragically, owing to the global failure to end the devaluation of female lives prenatally, the number of missing girls and women continues to increase around the world. UNFPA's State of World Population 2020 reports that the number of missing women has more than doubled over the past 50 years rising from 61 million in 1970 to over 142 million in 2020 with missing female births totaling nearly 1.2 million annually due to sex-selective abortion.

The report stresses that sex selection distorts a country's population for generations and perpetuates the gender inequality which led to the distorted sex ratios in the first place. It explains that human rights treaties, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, direct governments to take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of the children.

Yet, this harmful practice continues. The data collection and analysis website, Our World in Data, projects that by 2030 there will be over 149 million missing women globally with sex-selective abortion the leading cause.

Priests for Life believes that education and economic opportunities are critical for all women and girls and can help liberate them from poverty along with access to economic and financial resources, land ownership and inheritance, leadership positions, and participation in decision-making.

Women and girls must not be treated unequally because of their critical role as mother. Actions to alleviate poverty need to recognize the essential role of women in the family and assist them in their efforts to escape poverty and experience full empowerment and equality for their and their families' welfare.

Mother Teresa, now St. Theresa of Calcutta, when accepting her Nobel Peace Prize spoke about poverty and said, "To me the nations who have legalized abortion, they are the poorest nations. They are afraid of the little one, they are afraid of the unborn child, and the child must die because they don't want to feed one more child, to educate one more child, the child must die."

The world is at the half way mark to achieving Agenda 2030 and needs to do more to ensure that the most vulnerable members of the human family, children alive in the womb but not yet born, are not left behind as efforts to achieve equality and empowerment for all women and girls continue.

The preborn girl child is most vulnerable individual in the world today and at the highest risk for the injustice of being denied her right to life.

Sustainable Development Target 5.3 calls for the elimination of all harmful practices in the attempt to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Gender-biased sex selection must not be allowed to continue as it impedes achievement of SDG 5 Gender equality.

Priests for Life asks: When will girls be treated equally and recognized, respected, and protected from discrimination and violence throughout their lives? How many more girls will lose their lives through the harmful practice of sex selection abortion before the world unites to stop it?

Priests for Life calls upon the Commission on the Status of Women to commit to ending the harmful practice of gender-biased sex selection. If equality and empowerment of all women and girls is to be achieved, a consistent non-discriminatory protection of all women and girls throughout the life cycle must be embraced and advanced. Equality begins in the womb.

Commission on Population and Development
57th Session
April 29, 2024 - May 3, 2024

Theme: Assessing the status of implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development during the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

Priests for Life concurs with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. These include the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Priests for Life agrees with the Programme of Action's affirmation that human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development and people are the most important and valuable resource of any nation.

Priests for Life affirms the inherent right to life of every human being from conception to natural death and opposes attempts to eliminate select groups of people, including children alive in the womb but not yet born, especially preborn girls who are eliminated once identified in the womb through prenatal sex selection.

Prenatal sex selection is violent discrimination that was recognized as a harmful practice in the Programme of Action which called on governments to eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child and the root causes of son preference, which can result in harmful and unethical practices such as female infanticide, prenatal sex selection, and violence against the girl child.

In addressing the girl child, the Programme of Action expressed grave concern in 4.15 that discrimination against women and girls begins at the earliest stages of life and that son preference leads not only to loss of life for the youngest females but results in girls' lower rates of school enrollment and access to food and health care. It warned that the development of prenatal sex determination technologies have compounded the deadly practice of sex selective abortion.

Priests for Life warns that if the girl child can lose her life once her existence is known, Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls will never be fully achieved.

Targets for Goal 5 include ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere; eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres; and eliminating all harmful practices.

The Commission on Population and Development needs to address the long-term result of gender-biased abortion—skewed birth ratios—which grossly undermine women's empowerment and equality and result in tens of millions of missing women and girls. Evidence demonstrates that women in countries with the highest distorted sex ratios at birth suffer from

increased acts of violence and abuse, kidnappings, rapes, sex trafficking and prostitution, bride-selling, forced marriage, and child marriage as these countries struggle with the harmful consequences of missing women.

Tragically, owing to the global failure to end the devaluation of female lives prenatally, the number of missing girls and women continues to increase around the world. UNFPA's State of World Population 2020 reports that the number of missing women has more than doubled over the past 50 years rising from 61 million in 1970 to over 142 million in 2020 with missing female births totaling nearly 1.2 million annually due to sex-selective abortion.

The data collection and analysis website, Our World in Data, projects that by 2030 there will be over 149 million missing women globally with sex-selective abortion the leading cause.

Priests for Life urges the Commission on Population and Development to strongly voice opposition to the harmful practice of prenatal sex-selection and work for its elimination as stated in Sustainable Development Target 5.3 which calls for the elimination of all harmful practices in the effort to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Gender-biased sex selection must not be allowed to continue.

PFL cautions that any and all actions toward achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls are weakened by the underlying discrimination and violence against girls that begins at the earliest stages of life.

Priests for Life asks: How many more girls will lose their lives through the harmful practice of sex selection abortion before the world unites to stop it?

The world is at the half way mark to achieving Agenda 2030 and children alive in the womb but not yet born are at the highest risk of being left behind as abortion is promoted as health care, as a so-called right or even as reproductive freedom.

Priests for Life concurs with the Programme of Action that governments should take appropriate steps to help women avoid abortion, which in no case should be promoted as a method of family planning, and in all cases post abortive women should be provided humane treatment and counselling.

Priests for Life oversees the world's largest ministry for healing after abortion, Rachel's Vineyard, which offers hope and healing in a confidential and non-judgmental environment to thousands of post-abortive men and women each year who are suffering after abortion and helps them begin the process of restoration, renewal and healing. Its partner ministry, Silent No More Awareness, encourages those hurt by abortion to express their abortion regret and find healing.

Pope Francis expressed strong opposition to what he called the discarding of human beings as in the frightful case of children, victims of abortion, who will never see the light of day because they were considered unnecessary. He laments the throwaway culture that not only discards food and objects but human beings themselves.

The Programme of Action envisions a world where everyone, without distinction of any kind, has the right to life, liberty and security of person. Priests for Life agrees and believes the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development needs to include all, born or unborn, leaving no one behind.