

April 8, 2013

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On behalf of more than 60 organizations that promote women's and girls' empowerment, gender equality, development, health and human rights globally, we would like to thank you and the U.S. delegation for the strong leadership role that the United States played in achieving a positive and forward-looking outcome document at the 57<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

The Agreed Conclusions that resulted from the sometimes difficult negotiations proved a strong and welcomed statement on the elimination of violence against women and girls worldwide. We greatly appreciate the support of the U.S. delegation in ensuring this result. We want to applaud the delegation for achieving another important step forward, building on the global momentum of the past twenty years, which has created a strong framework to end all forms of violence against women, young women and girls.

The Agreed Conclusions reaffirmed previous commitments made in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and its Key Actions for Further Implementation, and other important international agreements, including the UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security. Progress on a number of issues related to sexual and reproductive health and human rights was achieved, including clearly stating that religion, culture and tradition cannot be used to excuse violations of the human rights of women and girls. The Agreed Conclusions also recognize the importance of investing in comprehensive sexuality education and providing essential health services for survivors of sexual violence, including emergency contraception and post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV -- two important tools to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. Furthermore, the recognition that illicit use and trade in small arms and light weapons actually aggravates violence against women and girls is a major achievement for the women, peace and security agenda. We also thank the U.S. for its leadership on strong language pertaining to both women's human rights defenders and to child, early and forced marriage, which were included in the Agreed Conclusions, and on intimate partner violence and sexual orientation and gender identity, which unfortunately were not.

As your delegation rightly noted, the Agreed Conclusions were only a beginning, and it is imperative that we all "continue the vital work ... to ensure that women and girls around the world have the safety and dignity they deserve." We are aware that you face a tremendous depth and breadth of responsibilities in your new role and we are grateful to know that we can count on your continued leadership on issues related to women and girls' health and human rights globally. We also want you to know that we are here to support your continued leadership and prioritization of issues related to women, girls and gender equality across U.S. foreign policy and assistance.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth  
African Solutions to African Problems (ASAP)  
American Jewish World Service  
Amnesty International USA  
CARE USA  
Catholics for Choice  
Center for Environment and Population (CEP)  
Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)  
Center for Reproductive Rights  
Center for Women Policy Studies  
EngenderHealth  
Equality Now  
Family Care International  
Feminist Majority Foundation  
FHI 360  
Fistula Foundation  
Friends of UNFPA  
Futures Without Violence  
Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace & Security  
Girls Learn International  
Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS  
GreeneWorks  
IDSA Center for Global Health Policy  
Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy  
Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University  
International Center for Research on Women  
International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)  
International Medical Corps  
International Women's Health Coalition  
International Youth Foundation  
IPAS  
IREX  
Management Sciences for Health  
mothers2mothers  
MSI-US  
National Council of Jewish Women  
One By One  
Pathfinder International  
Peace X Peace  
Plan International USA  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA)  
Population Action International  
Population Council  
Population Institute  
Population Media Center  
Protect the People (PTP)

PSI (Population Services International)  
Public Health Institute  
Religious Institute  
Sauti Yetu Center for African Women, Inc.  
Solidarity Center  
Tostan  
UN Foundation  
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church & Society  
United Nations Associations of the National Capital Area  
United Nations Association of the USA  
US National Committee for UN Women  
Vital Voices Global Partnership  
Winrock International  
Women, Peace and Security Resources  
Women Thrive Worldwide  
Women's Refugee Commission  
World Learning

cc:

U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan E. Rice  
U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Rajiv Shah  
U.S. Representative to the UN Economic and Social Council Elizabeth M. Cousens  
Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs Esther Brimmer  
Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration Anne C. Richard  
White House Advisor on Violence Against Women Lynn Rosenthal  
Acting Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues Sharon Wiener  
U.S. Agency for International Development Assistant Administrator for Global Health Ariel Pablos-Mendez  
U.S. Agency for International Development Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Carla Koppell