

## PRESS COMMUNICATION

US “global gag” anti-abortion rule a major setback for women’s health, say MEPs

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Political group speakers reacted to President Donald Trump’s reinstatement of the “global gag” rule in a debate with EU humanitarian aid Commissioner Christos Stylianides on Tuesday. The executive order, signed on 23 January, obliges US-funded foreign NGOs to certify that they will not perform or actively promote abortion.

Humanitarian aid Commissioner Christos Stylianides expressed concern over the Presidential Memorandum Regarding the Mexico City Policy, signed by US President Donald Trump. “This decision could have an impact on our global development goals, like mothers’ mortality (..) and could potentially put young women’s health at risk”, he said.

The “EU humanitarian aid approach is based on needs” he stressed. A decision on abortion will depend on various factors, such as women’s health and the legal framework of a country. “A decision on how to treat women and girls is better left to doctors. It is not something for lawyers to prescribe”, he added.

“I strongly condemn the newly reinstated 'global gag' rule. We had an alarm call from Africa through Asia to Latin America about the serious consequences”, said Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (EPP, SE). “The risk is that women's mortality is going to increase.” - “We are not talking about being for or against abortion, we are talking about humanitarian law. Health. Safety. Child protection. And women’s rights are human rights.” Europe should step in and show leadership, she added, to counter Trump's sexism.

“It cannot be right that a woman's access to the full range of family planning choices becomes a political football”, said Linda McAvan (S&D, UK). “Some of the poorest women in the world, an estimated 225 million globally, will see their access to family planning and related services cut, but to choose when and if to have children is a woman’s fundamental right wherever she lives”, she added.

Branislav Škripek (ECR, SK) said that EU politicians should respect Donald Trump’s decision based on reasons such as “reverence to life, to be born, dignity of life and for those who are unborn. (...) Abortion cannot be called ‘basic health care’. We will not support Commission intent to spend millions to export this barbarism to developing nations”, he said.

“The agenda of so-called populist parties is not just about nationalism, anti-EU or national sovereignty. It’s also very much about sexism and misogyny, against women’s rights”, said Sophia in ‘t Veld (ALDE, NL). “The EU must not only not accept standards imposed by third countries, but set the standards (...) and fill the funding gap.”

Malin Björk (GUE/NGL, SE) stressed that the US President had banned virtually all support for women's reproductive health. Parliament has acted, she said as it voted requirements for increased EU funding. “We should clearly condemn the US “gag” rule, take up the battle in international fora, and commit more money”, she concluded.

Terry Reintke (Greens/EFA, DE) said “We are talking about the lives and well-being of millions of women worldwide, (...) about family planning and sexual education. Approximately 600 million dollars could be lost. We call on the Commission to increase EU funding”.

“The EU has no competence in this domain. Abortion is a crime”, said Beatrix von Storch (EFDD, DE). “Let us stop wanting to finance these things for which we have no competence. Let us care about the protection of life rather than about ending it”, she added.

Marie-Christine Arnautu (ENF, FR) said that any pretext would do in this forum to attack the new American President. It is up to the US government to decide on its own criteria for financing NGOs.

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