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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

**A Strengthened Commitment to Equality between Women and Men
A Women's Charter**

**Declaration by the European Commission on the occasion of the 2010 International
Women's Day**

**in commemoration of the 15th anniversary of the adoption of a Declaration and
Platform for Action at the Beijing UN World Conference on Women and of the 30th
anniversary of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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INTRODUCTION

Equality between women and men is a fundamental right, enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. It is one of the common values on which the European Union is founded.

Economic and social cohesion, sustainable growth and competitiveness, and tackling the demographic challenge depend on real equality between women and men.

Europe has made remarkable progress towards equality between men and women during the past decades: it has taken commitment to heart, put partnership into action, and combined its resources and instruments – legal, political and financial – to bring about change. Today, more girls than boys graduate from universities. Today, more women than ever before participate in Europe's labour force. Today, Europe fulfils more of its talents and uses more of its skills.

Obstacles to real equality, however, remain.

On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the Beijing UN World Conference on Women, we reiterate and strengthen the European Commission's commitment to making equality between women and men a reality. We will do this by strengthening the gender perspective in all our policies throughout our term of office and by bringing forward specific measures to promote gender equality. We pledge to dedicate the necessary resources to realise it.

In particular, the following principles of equality between women and men will underpin actions under this European Commission's term of office:

1. EQUAL ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

Discrimination, educational stereotypes, labour market segregation, precarious employment conditions, involuntary part-time work and the unbalanced sharing of care responsibilities with men affect the life choices and the economic independence of many women.

We reaffirm our commitment to ensure the full realisation of women's potential and the full use of their skills, to facilitate a better gender distribution on the labour market and more quality jobs for women. We will resolutely promote gender equality in the Europe 2020 strategy, consider quantified targets where appropriate, and promote genuine opportunities for both women and men to enjoy a work-life balance.

2. EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK AND WORK OF EQUAL VALUE

Women in the European Union still earn on average 18% less than men for every hour worked. They have fewer resources during their working life and in retirement, face more difficulties in accessing finance, and so are more affected than men by all forms of poverty, including in-work poverty.

We reaffirm our commitment to a forceful mobilisation of all instruments, both legislative and non-legislative, to close the gender pay gap. The gender pay gap is a cost Europe cannot afford. Together with the 27 EU Member States, we will work to significantly reduce the gender pay gap in the European Union by the end of this European Commission's term of office.

3. EQUALITY IN DECISION-MAKING

Women still do not have full access to the sharing of power and decision-making. Gender balance in decision-making, in political and economic life and in the public and private sectors, will help Europe shape more effective policies, develop a gender-aware knowledge-based society, and create a stronger and more prosperous democracy.

We reaffirm our commitment to pursue the fairer representation of women and men in positions of power in public life and the economy. We will use our powers, including Union incentive measures, to promote a greater share of women in positions of responsibility.

At our own level, we will commit to making all efforts in order to improve gender balance within the Commission.

4. DIGNITY, INTEGRITY AND AN END TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The full enjoyment of fundamental rights by women and girls is an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights and is essential for the advancement of women and girls, peace, security and development. Gender-based violence, including harmful customary or traditional practices, constitutes a violation of fundamental rights, in particular human dignity, the right to life, and the right to the integrity of the person. Such violation prevents the exercise of a self-determined life.

We reaffirm our commitment to ensure that respect for fundamental rights is at the core of our activities. We will undertake efforts to eliminate gender inequalities in access to healthcare and in health outcomes.

Europe does not tolerate gender-based violence. We will step up efforts to eradicate all forms of violence and to provide support for those affected. We will put in place a comprehensive and effective policy framework to combat gender-based violence. We will strengthen our action to eradicate female genital mutilation and other acts of violence, including by means of criminal law, within the limits of our powers.

5. GENDER EQUALITY BEYOND THE UNION

Our ambition is not limited to the borders of the Union. Gender equality must be fully incorporated into our external policies too so as to foster the social and economic independence and advancement of women and men throughout the world. The EU is committed to promoting gender equality in all contexts, including conflict and post-conflict countries. Reducing gender inequalities, tackling gender-based

violence, and promoting women's rights are essential for developing sustainable and democratic societies.

We reaffirm our commitment to the vigorous pursuit of gender equality in our relations with third countries, raise awareness of the rights of women, and push for the implementation of existing international instruments. We will promote and strengthen cooperation with international and regional organisations on advancing gender equality, making full use of the whole range of available instruments and tools. We will also support both State and Non-State actors in their efforts to promote gender equality in partner countries.

We declare our readiness to work on gender equality in partnership with all stakeholders, including civil society, at national, European, and international levels and in particular on the principles set out in this Charter. We will present a new strategy for equality between women and men in 2010 for the term of office of this European Commission and we will report regularly on its implementation.

We reaffirm our personal and collective commitment to a Europe of equality between women and men which offers a better life and a sustainable future for all.