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Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

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Ms Ursula von der Leyen
President-elect of the European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels

Subject: **Letter to European Commission President-elect, Ms von der Leyen**

Dear President-elect,

On behalf of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, it is my pleasure to congratulate you to your election as first female Commission President. Together with my colleagues from the FEMM Committee, we have always been fighting to create the same level playing field for men and for women.

The present decade has witnessed a visible drive against gender equality and the women's rights agenda across continents, which goes hand in hand with anti-democratic movements and attacks against fundamental rights and rule of law. Therefore, it is more important than ever that the 2019 European elections, with the highest turnout for 20 years, has given us a strong mandate of citizens to strive for an ambitious Europe *ensuring the achievement of women's rights and gender equality*.

It is now up to you to form a new strong Commission, which offers a reformed Europe and delivers results so urgently needed especially to women, representing about 50% of our population. In your "Political Guidelines for the next Commission 2019 - 2024" and during your hearing in Plenary on Tuesday 16th July you advocated for **diversity with fair and equal opportunities for all** in Europe. You referred to policies such as **parental leave arrangements for women and men, the access to childcare** who were essential for your personal career and which are at the core of **women's participation in the labour market, combatting poverty, including child poverty**, and of closing the **gender pay and pension gap**. Together with my colleagues from the FEMM Committee, I expect that **these promises will become legislative and binding acts** and we are looking forward to jointly achieve improvements for women and men all over Europe. As part of a new binding **European Gender Strategy**, you want to propose **new anti-discrimination legislation and binding pay-transparency measures**. It has to be your utmost priority to achieve economic independence of men and women all over Europe. We agree that **gender based violence, including sexual harassment and cyber violence**, shall be considered as a European crime under the Treaties and to the necessity for the EU to **ratify the Istanbul Convention**. Concerning the proposals that you will put forward, you need to make sure that the Commission and its services under your leadership assure **Gender Mainstreaming and gender equality (including i.a. LGBTIQ and other rights, as well as combating sexual exploitation and trafficking) throughout all policy areas**.

On several occasions, you promised to have a **fully-gender equal College**. We therefore ask you to call on all Member States to each nominate one female and one male candidate for the Commission in order to assure gender balance. We, the members of FEMM Committee, will accept nothing less. The rules of Parliament (annex VII on the Approval of the Commission and monitoring of commitments made during the hearings, article 1 para. 2) stipulates that the Parliament shall not only “*...have particular regard to gender balance*” but also that “*...it may express itself on the allocation of portfolio responsibilities by the President-elect.*” It will therefore be important to make sure that **female Commissioner-designates will be equipped with strong portfolios** and that there is a **gender balance with regard to the appointment of Commission Vice Presidents as well as the Cabinets’ staff**. Our decision on the Commission will depend on this.

As gender matters touch upon a wide range of policies, you might also want to make gender equality and Gender Mainstreaming, including LGBTIQ rights, a top priority in the Commission, **namely your own priority**.

Promoting gender equality not only on the top political but also the economic level, has to be at the core of your decision-making. Furthermore, you committed to **quotas for gender balance on company level** and to **seek a majority to unblock the Directive on women on boards** in the Council. We are looking forward to working together with you to end the blockage of this important Directive within the Council and expect you to take up bilateral talks with the blocking governments as soon as possible.

You consider yourself in the tradition of women pioneers, such as the first female EP President Simone Veil to get over barriers and stereotypes. We as the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality will hold you to your promises, including **turning legislative initiatives that our Committee is putting forward, into legislative proposals**, and work together with you to make them become reality.

We wish you all the best for your mandate as Commission President and we are looking forward to our future cooperation.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Regner', written in a cursive style.

Evelyn REGNER
Chair of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality