

January 22, 2024

To: Executive Board Members of the World Health Organization

RE: WHO entering into official relations with global abortion advocacy group, Center for Reproductive Rights

cc: Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus,
Director-General of the World Health Organization

Excellency,

We are disturbed that the WHO secretariat recommended that the WHO Executive Board enter into official relations with the Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR), as per WHO Executive Board document 154/37.

We urge you to oppose giving any official status within WHO to the Center for Reproductive Rights, a radical pro-abortion organization.

For thirty years, the Center for Reproductive Rights has been at the forefront of attempts to manipulate international cooperation to promote abortion as a human right. Their efforts to undermine the laws of Sovereign States protecting children in the womb and subvert human rights law are extensive and well-documented. Most notably, United States Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ) entered in the Congressional Record an internal strategy document of the Center for Reproductive Rights exposing the plan to exert undue influence on countries by co-opting UN treaty bodies and other UN mechanisms to promote abortion.ⁱ

Granting the Center for Reproductive Rights an official status within the WHO framework would run counter to the principles of the WHO Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors (WHA69.10, paragraph 5), which require the WHO Executive Board to consider if entering into official relations with a non-state actor may “compromise WHO’s integrity, independence, credibility, and reputation.” This is squarely the case with the Center for Reproductive Rights, which has proved incapable of providing accurate legal information and has repeatedly compromised scientific evidence in its advocacy materials in favor of its preferred policy outcomes.

The group routinely misrepresents the status of abortion in international treaties as well as other human rights issues. There is no obligation in any binding international treaty pertaining to abortion. The Center for Reproductive Rights also promotes comprehensive sexuality education, transgender and sexual rights issues, and other controversial social policies, all under the guise of promoting binding human rights obligations pertaining to “sexual and reproductive health and rights,” when in fact, no such obligations exist.

The WHO Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors recognizes that when the WHO Executive Board grants a non-state actor official relations with the organization it is in fact “conferring an endorsement of the non-State actor’s name, brand, product, views or activity” (WHA69.10, paragraph 7).

Granting the Center for Reproductive Rights an official status within the WHO framework will undermine trust in global health and erode political support for the WHO from pro-life people everywhere. It will certainly expose WHO to loss of funding under future pro-life U.S. presidential administrations. Federal law expressly prohibits the use of U.S. funds to lobby for abortion.ⁱⁱ Promoting the views of the Center for Reproductive Rights within the WHO framework may qualify as lobbying, as the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights discovered when the Trump Administration withdrew funds for its pro-abortion activities.

Giving special status to the Center for Reproductive Rights will further fuel the culture wars undermining the WHO’s mission to tackle health issues. It confirms fears that WHO’s new accord on pandemic preparedness will be used to undermine national laws related to abortion. The Trump Administration took several steps to hold multilateral institutions accountable for illegally promoting abortion during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the World Health Organization, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, and UN human rights mechanisms. Future pro-life U.S. administrations are expected to do the same.

We also anticipate that future pro-life U.S. administrations and members of Congress will take a decision to give a special status within WHO to the Center for Reproductive Rights as evidence that the WHO is unreformable and as a further argument to withhold all funding to the organization. The U.S. Government is the largest WHO donor, supplying the WHO over \$700 million in fiscal year 2022.

The undersigned U.S. pro-life organizations urge you to stop the WHO from entering into an official relationship with the Center for Reproductive Rights.

Respectfully,

Center for Family and Human Rights

Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America

Americans United For Life

Concerned Women for America

American Association of Pro-life

Obstetricians and Gynecologists (AAPLOG)

International Organization for the Family

Human Life International

Family Research Council

The Heritage Foundation

National Right to Life

The Institute for Women's Health

Students for Life Action

Family Watch International

ACLJ Action

Keystone Policy

The Honorable Michele Bachmann
Eagle Forum
Radiance Foundation
Urban Renewal and Education (CURE)
StandUpGirl Foundation
Right to Life of East Texas
Traditional Family, Property Inc
LifeNews
iRapture.com

Human Life Alliance
The Justice Foundation
The Christian Defense Coalition
Project 21 Black Leadership Network
Issues4Life Foundation
Media Research Center
Pro-Life Ribbon
Fertility Business Initiatives Institute

ⁱ See 149 CONG. REC. E2534-35 (daily ed. Dec. 8, 2003) (statement of Rep. Christopher Smith).

ⁱⁱ Section 525 of the Foreign Assistance and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1982 (P.L. 97-121; 95 Stat. 1657), approved December 29, 1981. This provision was incorporated most recently in FY2022 State-Foreign Operations Appropriations Act, 136 Stat. 576.