

Dear

The United States appreciates our longstanding partnership in many global health areas. As a key priority in global health promotion, we respectfully request that your government join the United States in ensuring that every sovereign state has the ability to determine the best way to protect the unborn and defend the family as the foundational unit of society vital to children thriving and leading healthy lives. We remain gravely concerned that aggressive efforts to reinterpret international instruments to create a new international right to abortion and to promote international policies that weaken the family have advanced through some United Nations fora. Evidence of this is found in references throughout many multilateral global health policy documents to interpret “comprehensive sexuality education” and “sexual and reproductive health” and “sexual and reproductive health and rights” to diminish the role of parents in the most sensitive and personal family-oriented issues. The latter has been asserted to mean promotion of abortion, including pressuring countries to abandon religious principles and cultural norms enshrined in law that protect unborn life. These approaches undermine our shared commitment to sustainable development and to achieving health for all, leaving no one behind.

Efforts to advance such harmful policies in multilateral settings where global health policy is debated and set, like the United Nations and affiliated bodies such as the World Health Organization, are disturbing and must be challenged. They take the focus off real health issues and import policy debates that should be handled at the national, sub-national, or community level. Furthermore, we are disappointed that the tone of these debates is increasingly divisive, diminishing the focus on shared global health priorities. Given this, we were gratified that at the 2019 World Health Assembly, a broad and diverse coalition of members states (Brazil, Egypt, Ghana, Haiti, Indonesia, Iraq, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and the United States) came together to deliver a joint statement calling on nations to advance positive women’s health programs and initiatives in line with the sustainable development goals, but stating unequivocally that ambiguous terms and expressions cause confusion and have become associated with anti-family and pro-abortion policies. Countries on the joint statement represent more than one billion people, and we have every confidence more countries could join this worthy effort. We have three specific requests as your government considers partnering with the United States and other countries in this effort.

First, please consider joining a joint statement being developed for the U.N. General Assembly High Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage similar to the one used at the World Health Assembly. If you are interested in doing so, then please instruct your diplomats and Health Attachés in New York and Geneva to collaborate with the United States and our allies on the development and presentation of this joint statement and to work together to achieve an outcome document from the High Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage this fall that reflects our shared values.

Finally, please encourage other countries in your region to join this growing coalition to push back against harmful efforts to interpret long-standing international instruments as requiring anti-family and pro-abortion policies and to promote proactively positions that will protect families and strengthen the health of all people.

Thank you for considering these specific requests. Working together, we can ensure a lasting and positive global health legacy for our nations and our children.

Sincerely,

Michael R. Pompeo

Alex M. Azar II