

Pro-Life Congressmen Thwart US Support for UN Abortion Initiative

By Piero A. Tozzi and Susan Yoshihara

(NEW YORK – C-FAM) Pro-life congressmen, lead by Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Bart Stupak (D-MI), rescued a congressional resolution supporting reduction of women’s mortality at home and abroad from surreptitiously advancing the pro-abortion agenda advanced at the United Nations. House Resolution 1022, as now drafted, promotes both “maternal health and child survival” without a stealth promotion of abortion.

The language that was removed by Smith and Stupak called for funding of “global initiatives” and the recognition of maternal health as a “human right.” Using such language would have lent U.S. support for a new pro-abortion initiative launched at a London conference last October called “Women Deliver.” At the Women Deliver conference pro-abortion advocates launched the International Initiative on Maternal Mortality and Human Rights that seeks to link the maternal mortality issue with access to abortion while furthering development of “soft law” norms that include abortion as a human right.

Among those launching the initiative at the Women Deliver conference were UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Director Thoraya Obaid, the initiative’s architect and then UN Special Rapporteur for Health, Paul Hunt, and the President of the pro-abortion law firm and secretariat for the initiative Center for Reproductive Rights, Nancy Northrup.

Council of Europe May Approve Homosexual Marriage

By Maciej Golubiewski

(WASHINGTON, DC – C-FAM) A few weeks ago the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) voted in favor of a non-binding resolution calling on European nations to make abortion a human right. The same assembly is soon to vote on a resolution calling for legalization of homosexual marriage.

The committee debating the resolution considered disparate treatment of “same-sex couples” to be “unlawful discrimination” and urged that European countries aspire to be “tolerant, pluralist and broadminded.” The committee called for PACE to “study the legal recognition of same-sex partnerships in Europe” and make further appropriate recommendations. The committee has criticized Central and Eastern European countries such as Poland and Latvia, where it sent several fact-finding missions. The constitutions of Poland and Latvia reserve marriage exclusively for opposite-sex couples.

The European Center for Law and Justice (ECLJ) is spearheading a campaign with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to oppose the draft resolution. ECLJ counsel Gregor Puppink said that “the European Convention of Human Rights states expressly in Article 12 that the ‘right to marry and to found a family’ is guaranteed to ‘men and women of marriageable age.’ The European Court of Human Right cannot, and has always refused to infer from this article, a ‘human right’ for homosexuals to marry.”

Northrup stated at the launching that she believes UN treaties already contain an international right to abortion and she would work through the initiative and with UN partners to further that understanding and bind UN member states to recognize that right.

The Women Deliver conference, organized and chaired by the world's top abortion advocates, including International Planned Parenthood Federation, Ipas and "Catholics" for a Free Choice, was also sponsored by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization in addition to the UNFPA.

House Resolution 1022's primary sponsor, Lois Capps (D-CA), was one of three members of Congress that attended the Women Deliver conference. A number of pro-life members of Congress, unaware of the provenance of the global initiative and health rights language, originally signed onto the draft version of the resolution.

One misstatement that remains uncorrected in the present version is assertion that "an estimated 536,000 women die during pregnancy and childbirth" – a number touted at the Women Deliver conference but unsubstantiated by the UN's own statisticians. The UN Population Division report *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics* states that "more than a third of the 204 countries or areas examined did not report the number of deaths by sex even once for the period 1995 to 2003 . . . About half did not report deaths by cause, sex and age at least once in the same period."

The ECLJ also warns of mixing legitimate concerns of violence against homosexuals with illegitimate incursions on prerogatives explicitly reserved to nation states in international law. ECLJ explains that Article 12 permits regulation of marriage "according to the national laws governing the exercise of this right." ECLJ has also complained about the lack of transparency in the drafting process. The PACE committees keep resolution drafts secret before introducing them on the floor, leaving little time for comment.

At the same time, the European Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, published an official communication calling for including "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" as protected categories under European human rights law. He praised the Yogyakarta Principles, an NGO document drafted two years ago by left-wing lawyers and activists. The Yogyakarta Principles recommends policies that would "recogniserecognize the diversity of family forms," challenge notions of "public morality" in domestic law, and promote curricula that "serve to enhance...respect for diverse sexual orientations and gender identities" in public schools.

In a parallel development, yesterday the European Parliament – a separate body attached to the European Union (EU) – voted in its own non-binding resolution advocating a ban on all forms of discrimination, including sexual orientation, in all areas of EU law. The resolution puts pressure on the European Commission, which is expected to submit a proposal for a binding anti-discrimination directive to the European Parliament by the end of this year. A few

In a statement preceding passage of the bill, Rep. Smith pointed out that “when women receive proper prenatal care, they are less likely to die in childbirth,” adding that the final form of the resolution “does not endorse – in any way whatsoever – the cruel ideology that pits women against babies by suggesting abortion as a means of combating maternal mortality.”

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weeks ago, the European Commission withdrew its plans for a directive that would cover sexual discrimination, which gave the left-wing parliamentarians an impetus for passing yesterday’s resolution.

The Council of Europe is distinct from the EU; it is larger with 47 Member States, and also older. The Council of Europe is considered the chief protector and promoter of human rights in Europe.