



## **Zonta International reaffirms support for The Council of Europe Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence**

Over the last year, as COVID-19 has spread across the globe, violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence, has increased dramatically. As countries have implemented social distancing and lockdown measures to limit the spread of COVID-19, women and girls already at risk of violence have faced increased danger.

These unique and challenging circumstances call for a coordinated and holistic response to preventing and responding to violence against women and girls and domestic violence. Now is the time for governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector to come together to prioritize strategies and resources to prevent violence against women and girls and address the needs of women and girls who have been victims of violence. That is why in September 2020, [Zonta International issued a renewed call for ratification of The Istanbul Convention](#). The Istanbul Convention is the global gold standard for addressing violence against women and domestic violence and has proven to be a highly effective tool which generates positive changes. It can, and has, literally saved the lives of women and girls by lowering the rate of femicide. From combating sexism to increasing national 24/7 helplines and support services and enhanced law enforcement, over the last decade governments bound by the convention have taken action to prevent violence, protect women and girls and prosecute the perpetrators.

We must continue to build on these efforts to ensure that all women and girls are able to live lives free from violence. Therefore, Zonta International, as an organization dedicated to gender equality and the eradication of all forms of violence against women and girls, is greatly concerned by the news that several countries have indicated their intent to withdraw from the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence precisely at the time when it is needed most. We must not take steps backward.

Zonta International, a non-governmental organization with participatory status at the Council of Europe, opposes all forms of violence against women and girls. We urge all countries that have ratified The Istanbul Convention not to withdraw from the Convention, which provides a comprehensive framework to prevent violence, to protect victims, to prosecute perpetrators and to implement state-wide policies that are effective in preventing and combating all forms of violence against women. For those countries that have yet to sign or ratify the Convention, we urge them to do so now and demonstrate their commitment to gender equality and an end to violence against women and girls.

Zonta International remains committed to promoting and protecting the rights of all women and girls to live life free from violence. We will work with the United Nations, Council of Europe, partners, Zonta clubs and individual members to support gender equality and meaningful actions to prevent violence against women and girls across the globe.

Zonta Says NO to violence against women and girls.