DECLARATION OF THE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT (SEIMAS) OF LITHUANIA

ON THE RATIFICATION OF THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION

2018-03-12

Vilnius

*Recognizing* that violence against women, which women experience disproportionately, is a crime and a violation of human rights;

*Realizing* that it is the duty of the state to ensure adequate protection of women against violence and assistance to women who have suffered from violence;

*Noting* that the Istanbul Convention is by its nature a legislative convention, primarily addressed to those members of the Council of Europe who have not yet created a legal framework for protecting women from violence;

*Stating* that the Lithuanian legal system has already reached the primary objective of the Istanbul Convention: it already applies all the legal provisions aimed at combating violence against women which the Istanbul Convention seeks to implement and the legal provisions can be improved without ratifying the Istanbul Convention. There is therefore no legal need for ratification of the Convention;

*Noting* that the provisions of the Istanbul Convention duplicate the system of surveillance and monitoring of violence against women already established in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979), on which all the measures taken in Lithuania to combat violence against women are based;

*Concerned* that the concept of “gender” (lt. “social sex”) used in the Istanbul Convention can be interpreted ambiguously and as a concept that does not recognize sex as a natural human characteristic;

*Evaluating* that the emergence of the concept of “gender” in the legal system of Lithuania would endanger consistent family policy that is oriented to family, based on marriage between man and woman and (or) kinship (paternity and maternity) relationships;

*Noting* that the translation of the concept of “gender” into the Lithuanian language will not change the meaning of this concept in international law since the authentic (official) text of the Istanbul Convention is in English and French (Article 33 of the Vienna Convention);

*Knowing* that the Istanbul Convention is considered controversial in the Member States of the European Union, and there has been more and more recent statements by Member States against the ratification of the Istanbul Convention precisely because of the ambiguous interpretation of the concept of “gender” in the Convention and *being in solidarity* with these Member States;

we are convinced that ratification of the Istanbul Convention is not expedient and we call on the Government of the Republic of Lithuania not to continue the ratification procedure of the Convention, but to pay more attention to improving the legislation, improving the system of protecting women from violence and providing assistance to all women who have experienced violence.

Members of the Parliament