

CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE

IN GOOD CONSCIENCE

Minister André Rouvoet
Minister for Youth and Families
Postbus 16166
2500 BD, Den Haag
The Netherlands

August 6, 2009

[Via Fax and Email]

Dear Minister André Rouvoet,

We understand that you have agreed to provide a welcome message by videolink to the World Congress of Families, organized by the Howard Center for Family, Religion, and Society, in Amsterdam on August 10. We would respectfully urge that you withdraw from this meeting. Several speakers at the conference have a long record of intolerance towards minorities and towards those of different religious beliefs. By agreeing to speak, you may be associated with those homophobic and xenophobic views, going against the Netherlands' long record of tolerance and acceptance.

This is the fifth meeting of the World Congress of Families. Previous conferences sought to marginalize those with more tolerant views and promoted campaigns against advances in civil and political rights around the world, with the work done at the United Nations a particular target.

A cursory look at a few of the speakers and sponsors illustrates our case:

Anna Zaborska, Member of the European Parliament

Ms Zaborska has made several antigay comments, including "AIDS is God's vengeance for homosexuality" and "I don't want to discriminate against anyone, but with these people [homosexuals] there is the potential chance that their outlook on life in basic family matters, on male and female relations, could influence children." Her views on what a family should look like are no more progressive: "We want to protect the traditional family based on the marriage of one man and one woman. We voted on this basis in the National Parliament but we want to proceed in the same way together with our partners in Europe, in the European Parliament."

Steven W. Mosher, president, Population Research Institute

The Population Research Institute is an offshoot of Human Life International, and operated under its auspices during the 1990s, when it suddenly claimed no ties to the group—this despite the fact that Marx was listed as PRI's chairman as late as 2000. Mosher joined PRI in

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1995, after being excused from studies at Stanford University for, as the university said, "illegal and seriously unethical conduct" that "endangered his research subjects," Science magazine reported at the time. One of the aspects of his field work that got him into trouble involved Chinese women, some of them shown in photographs undergoing abortions. His anti-China bias has not subsided over the past 20 years, and his group was instrumental in promoting the disproved allegation that UNFPA was involved in coercive abortion practices in China. Several subsequent fact-finding missions have disproved Mosher and PRI's claims.

Austin Ruse, president, Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute

Austin Ruse is the president of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute and an individual who has been outspoken about a willingness to disrupt the workings of the United Nations. Ruse has boasted of his "vener of support" for the UN and his willingness to break "every single rule of UN lobbying." Ruse has also shown that he embraces extreme operating principles and lack of cultural sensitivity in pursuit of his goals at the UN: "When we finally convinced the Muslims that 'forced pregnancy' meant abortion and they rose up and they squashed it. You know, our whole game is to make the Muslims as mad as possible at the radical feminists. If that happens, we win. Nothing like a Muslim in full-throated outrage at a radical feminist from the United States."

Sponsors of the conference include the Family Research Council, which has initiated a campaign against gay teachers and the inclusion of basic reproductive health measures in the ongoing debate over healthcare reform in the United States and the Polish Fr. Peter Skarga Association for Christian Culture whose chairman, Slawomir Olejniczak, vehemently opposed the European Constitution's Charter of Fundamental Rights because it proposed that EU countries treat gay men and women equally.

Other sponsors include several groups that seek to deny equality to women and minorities, and return society back to Victorian values: Priests For Life, Human Life International, Americans United for Life, Associazione per la Difesa Dei Valori Cristiani – Luci sull'Est (Italy), Concerned Women For America, Family Watch International, REAL Women of Canada, Red Familia (Family Network of Mexico) and Tradition, Family and Property.

A special concern of ours relates to how this conference intends to deal with the concept of family. The first day, when your address will be shown, has the theme Modern Families, Traditional Values. It is the second part of that title that concerns us. At present, the European Union considers family members to include registered partners if the legislation of the host Member state considers registered partnership as equivalent to marriage, as several European nations do. In addition, the concept of a durable relationship was also ratified, meaning that couples in long-standing relationships would be considered family members.

In reviewing the agenda and speakers' list for the conference, we fear that many of the speakers will be hostile to any inclusive vision of what represents a family in the 21st century. Many speakers have themselves or represent organizations that have expressed outright hostility to recognizing any family unit that does not include a married couple and their offspring. Clearly their target in most cases is homosexual couples.

The Netherlands rightly prides itself on supporting and spreading religious tolerance, pluralism and inclusion. This conference and many of those who will be attending reject that ethos outright. We have no problem with people expressing beliefs and convictions that we do not share. In a free

society, that is right and just. However, we do object when government officials lend support to such views, especially when platforms are used to denigrate and attack those with whom they disagree.

We urge you to withdraw from this event, or, if you must attend, please use the opportunity to promote tolerance, equality and pluralism and issue a forthright repudiation of the antigay, antiwomen views of which we have provided examples.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon O'Brien". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".

Jon O'Brien
President

Elfriede Harth
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Henk Baars (The Netherlands),
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