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OPEN LETTER

Dear Candidates in the forth coming European elections to be held in June 2009,

The European democracy suffers from the lack of a real implementation of the fundamental principles stated in the Union's founding texts: equal rights for all citizens which means equal rights between women and men.

As elections for a new European Parliament are nearing, it is essential that women and men citizens have a clear view of the position held by women and men candidates regarding the crucial challenge that true equal rights between men and women represent in our society when choices made by their political parties have considerable impact on elections results.

The European Feminist Initiative for another Europe (IFE-EFI) is a European network created to enable women to have their voices heard throughout Europe and have their alternative proposals taken into account. Equal rights and the recognition of the fundamental rights of women, who have been maintained on back seats throughout a long patriarchal history, are the only possible means to put an end to the shameful archaism of our century.

In a context of increasing intrusion of religious fundamentalism and the threats that such an evolution represents for women's rights, EFI has among its main objectives, the protection of the principle of secularism in the Members States.

The feminist proposals of a Secular Europe were drafted during the International Conference we held in Rome, in June 2008, and in the context of the European campaign, we would like to question women and men candidates on their Parties' projects regarding this specific issue.

We thank you in advance for answering as accurately as possible to the following questions:

1) In our view, Article 16-C of the Treaty of Lisbon and Article II-70 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights¹ do not at all stand as the

basis of a Secular Europe. Will you campaign for a revision of the European treaties in order to clear out their current inconsistencies?

2) Will you actively support, as of now, the thorough separation between religious and State institutions and how do you intend to do it?

3) Will your fight to keep civil and family laws free of any reference to religion?

4) Will you require the Member States not to recognize, in their countries any foreign family code or laws related to personal status based on religious principles which violate women's rights?

5) Will you oppose the use of culture, religion, traditions and customary practices to justify the discriminations imposed on women?

6) Will you be committed to guaranteeing asylum in the EU Member States for all those who are victims or threatened of persecution on the basis of religious rites in their countries?

7) Will you be committed to having women's freedom to own their own bodies as well as having their rights to sexual education, birth control and abortion and their sexual freedom respected; will you be committed like wise to providing the necessary means to ensure the recognition and implementation of these rights?

8) Will you support, at the European level, the need of a fundamental institutional change, of a reorientation of European policies so as to recognize equal rights between men and women as a founding value?

¹ The Treaty of Lisbon, Art. 17 §3: "Recognizing their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organizations".

The European Charter of Fundamental Rights, Part II Art. 10 Section: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion: "This right includes [...], either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance".

These goals are crucial. They constitute an essential stake for a democratic Europe. As our platform herein enclosed states it, ensuring women's fundamental rights constitutes a basic pledge for the future of Europe.

We look forward to receiving your reply.

Yours faithfully,

For the European coordination of IFE-EFI

25/05/09