

## **INTERNATIONAL STATEMENT FOR A GLOBAL BAN ON WOMB RENTAL**

### **The undersigning women's human rights and civil society organizations alert that...**

1. Womb rental (also known as 'surrogacy') is a serious violation of rights and dignity of women and children. It is indeed a form of reproductive exploitation of women that treats newborns as commodities that are subject to commercial agreements.
2. The hiring of wombs poses a risk to women's physical and psychological integrity and undermines women's right to filiation and other fundamental rights. It also violates the right of children to know their origins. In fact, the hiring of wombs is the most prominent form of trafficking in women and children for the purpose of reproductive exploitation; it is a business that provides multi-million-dollar benefits to intermediary agencies and clinics.
3. Womb rental contravenes the fundamental human rights of women and children stipulated in international conventions and treaties such as the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, Articles 3 and 6), the Convention to Suppress the Slave Trade and Slavery (Art. 1), the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (Art. 7, 9 and 35), the Option Protocol to the International Convention of the Rights of the Child (Art. 2 a and 3), and the Additional Protocol to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Art. 3 a).
4. The wish for becoming father or mother of children who possess ones' own genetic material is not a right either a human right. Wishes are not systematically equivalent to rights.
5. 'Altruistic surrogacy' does not exist. This practice cannot be defined as 'altruistic' because it involves the signature of a contract, the waiver of fundamental rights as well as economic transactions and 'compensations'. Womb rental consists of a mean-spirited and selfish practice that creates a system of 'reproductive maids' and converts children into commodities that are bought and sold on demand.
6. The womb-rental industry operates in developing countries using the same criminal strategies than those of the human trafficking networks. These tactics include the identification and recruitment of women in vulnerable situation so that they are more likely to rent their wombs for money.
7. Many countries have a very weak Rule of Law, so the legalization of any aspect of womb rental -such as the so-called 'altruistic' surrogacy- means in practice the full legalization of surrogacy and, therefore, the legitimation of the reproductive exploitation of women. The regularization of surrogacy opens the door to the reproductive exploitation of women committed by the elites of those countries and nurtures the international mafias of organ trafficking and of the exploitation of children.
8. The rent-a-womb industry is lobbying representatives from governments and the United Nations to legalize surrogacy. Economic and profiteering benefits are the only interests of this lobby. However, the rent-a-womb industry is trying to cover its interests by arguing that surrogacy is a form of 'assisted reproductive technology' and a matter of women's 'free choice'; while they purposely ignore the situation of poverty and vulnerability of women who rent their wombs.

9. The United Nations and two of its agencies are currently trying to influence governments all around the world, and especially from developing countries, for the legalization of surrogacy - of the so-called 'altruistic' surrogacy-. These two UN agencies are the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).
10. We recall to governments and States that surrogacy is against the civil and penal codes from the vast majority of countries as well as against the international conventions and treaties signed and ratified by them. Therefore, governments cannot and should not allow the international transfer of future children born through surrogacy either these children's registration; otherwise, governments are encouraging a legal fraud that perpetuates the violation of human rights of children and women.

**And that is why we...**

1. **Call upon** all heads of State and Government who are participating at the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the UN General Assembly to make public statements in support of human rights of women and children and for the global ban on womb rental ('surrogacy').
2. **Urge** all governments to take all necessary measures to prosecute and prevent the womb rental at international and national levels, with a close cooperation between governments and a proactive role of embassies, consulates, police and judicial systems.
3. **Request** the outlawing and shutting down of intermediary agencies, clinics and all businesses involved in the rent-a-womb industry in all countries, as well as the banning of this industry's advertisements.
4. **Exhort** the funding governments of the United Nations to review their financial contributions to the UN agencies that support the legalization of womb rental -the so-called 'altruistic' surrogacy-, namely the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).
5. **Appeal to** all government to work further to eradicate poverty of women and gender inequality, as well as to increase efforts to promote and protect the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of women, including women's sexual and reproductive rights.

***List of organizations signing off the statement is presented in attached document***

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