



Brussels, 30 April 2021

Dear High Representative Borrell,

At the end of this year, the European mandate as High Representative, which President Von der Leyen entitled you to, will arrive halfway. It is with regret that we observe the remaining gender-imbalance in the European External Action Service (EEAS) and, particularly, in the attribution of management and decision-making positions to women, including in your own cabinet.

While your decisive position as High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is crucial in leading by example, it is regrettable that the EEAS is still far from reaching its target of 40 percent of women in senior positions by 2025, including as heads of delegations and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations. Men hold 87 percent of senior management and 75 percent of middle management posts in the EEAS according to a [parliamentary report](#) adopted last year in FEMM and AFET Committees.

The EEAS record on female leadership is in sharp contrast with that of the European Commission, which has similarly committed to gender balance and reached gender parity, as a result of political choice, among its Commissioners last year. The recent appointments of 11 high-level officials in the EEAS and in its delegations included five women, which illustrates some improvement in the achievement of the aforementioned target. However, we believe the EEAS can do more and it is time to take more measures and actions to foster the achievement of equality.

A profound need for an ambitious affirmation of our values is clear. After having set an ambitious agenda for its mandate including a clear commitment for gender equality, the European Commission along with our two other institutions is now launching an innovative reflection about the future of Europe. To a unique extent, women's rights are being threatened,

particularly with the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent backlash of women's rights in Europe and in the World. We should use the historical period we live in to accelerate greater change and truly live up to the values the European Union stands for.

The EU has a leading role in fostering gender equality globally through its external action. Female leadership is essential in setting an example and empowering women and girls across the globe. We therefore implore you to take concrete actions to solve the gender imbalance and live-up to your statements in the respect, promotion and support of the European values of equality.

Sincerely,

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**Irène Tolleret** MEP, Renew Europe

**Hilde Vautmans** MEP, Renew Europe

**Karen Melchior** MEP, Renew Europe

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