PRESS RELEASE

ALLIANCE FOR MATERNAL HEALTH EQUALITY

More mother care needed in Europe

A new Alliance wants European Parliament resolution adopted to protect and save the lives of mothers in Europe

Brussels, 29 September 2015 – Maternal mortality is often seen as a problem for the developing world alone. Yet, in Europe - the world's richest continent - too many women still die during pregnancy and childbirth. A new Alliance of MEPs and influential pan-European and global organisations calls on the EU to take action to ensure equal access to maternal healthcare for all women, regardless of nationality and background.

According to the new Alliance for Maternal Health Equality, many mothers are falling through the cracks of disconnected EU Member States' (MS) legislation. In 2013 alone, there were nearly 2,000 maternal deaths in Europe. Often it is the most vulnerable groups, including migrant and adolescent mothers, who are the first to face limited access to proper treatment, information and resources before, during and after pregnancy.

MEP Mariya Gabriel (BG; EPP), who is championing the Alliance, said:

"Ensuring access to quality maternal healthcare in Europe should be part of our broader strategy to achieve women's empowerment. It is also key to improving general health in the EU. There is an absolute and urgent need for Europe to address health disparities among, but also within, Member States, in particular in the case of maternal care. In view of the current situation, special attention should be paid to the needs of vulnerable women, for instance migrant mothers, who are more exposed to the challenges that prevent safe motherhood in Europe."

The Alliance for Maternal Health Equality met today at the European Parliament in Brussels, just days after the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York where over 150 world leaders committed to protecting human rights and promoting gender equality as part of the new sustainable development agenda.

Dr. Priya Agrawal, Executive Director of Alliance member MSD for Mothers, who attended the summit, spoke passionately at today's Parliament briefing:

"Pregnancy and birth should be a healthy and positive experience for all. We believe in a world where mum and child always receive the best care and support. This is not the case, even in developed countries, and it's time to change it."

Today's briefing was held as part of the Safe Motherhood Week, a new annual initiative that aims to raise awareness of maternal rights and safe motherhood in Europe.

- ENDS –

Notes to editors

The Alliance for Maternal Health Equality brings together key stakeholders at EU and national level to ensure that policies provide for maternal health equality. It works on

three objectives:

1. Campaigning for universal access to maternal health at EU level (health inequalities, migration, health systems);
2. Focusing on real-life evidence (going beyond policies: ensuring that there are clear statistics, demonstrating the need for change within the field of maternal health equality); and
3. Creating an environment that empowers and gives women choices, for example, in relation to childcare and workplace policies.

Members of the Alliance for Maternal Health Equality include MEPs Mariya Gabriel (BG; EPP) and Filiz Hyusmenova (BG; ALDE), the Pregnancy and Medicine Initiative (PMI), MSD for Mothers, The Synergist and European Parliamentary Forum on Population & Development (EPF).

See: www.maternalhealthalliance.eu

Key figures
- 5 million women give birth in Europe each year[1]. Of these, 1 in 10 don't have access to care during the first months of pregnancy[2]
- In 2013, there were an estimated 1,900 maternal deaths in Europe[3]
- Out of 8,656 surveyed women, 54% of the 310 pregnant women seen at Doctors of the World clinics in 9 European countries lacked access to antenatal care and a large majority were living in poverty[4]
- Particular groups of women in Europe have a higher risk of adverse outcomes of pregnancy and birth. These include:
  - Adolescents
  - Migrants
  - Roma
  - Women with low socioeconomic status or education levels[5]
- Roma women are particularly vulnerable. As an example, 9 out of 10 Roma women in France have no access to maternal healthcare[6]

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[1] European Women's Lobby (EWL), Factsheet on Women and Health, April 2015:
http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?action=acceder_document&arg=4238&cle=60c8d7ee6f9 2fc58b53873cd67591c17ccbcb29e&file=pdf%2Ffactsheet_women_and_health.pdf
[2] World Health Organization, Maternal and Newborn Health Data and Statistics, Accessed July 29, 2015: http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Life-stages/maternal-and-newborn-health/data-and-statistics
[3] World Health Organization (WHO), Trends in Maternal Mortality 1990-2013, p. 51, 2014:
http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/112682/2/9789241507226_eng.pdf?ua=1
[4] Doctors of the World, Access to healthcare for children and pregnant women in Europe 2015, May 2015: http://b.3cdn.net/droftheworld/426949db427014e434_q6m6bliru.pdf
[5] World Health Organization, Maternal and Newborn Health, Accessed July 29, 2015:
http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Life-stages/maternal-and-newborn-health/maternal-and-newborn-health
[6] European Women's Lobby (EWL), Factsheet on Women and Health, April 2015:
http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?action=acceder_document&arg=4238&cle=60c8d7ee6f9 2fc58b53873cd67591c17ccbcb29e&file=pdf%2Ffactsheet_women_and_health.pdf