July 26, 2019

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
United State Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We write to you today to express our strong opposition to the negative Kemp-Kasten determination against the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) for a third consecutive year. The annual determination process continues to be performed in bad faith and without evidence of violations to the Kemp-Kasten Amendment. Defunding UNFPA is antithetical to American values and jeopardizes the lives and well-being of women and girls.

UNFPA works in more than 150 countries to end preventable maternal deaths, provide voluntary family planning, and eradicate gender-based violence such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. By withholding funding from UNFPA, this Administration is withholding lifesaving care from the world’s women and girls and abdicating our leadership on human rights. Defunding UNFPA also threatens other key global health goals, such as ending the HIV epidemic.

The Administration made this determination without any evidence to justify its serious allegations of “forced sterilization” and “coerced abortions.” It is regrettable that the Administration did not bother to conduct a site visit of UNFPA’s China program, despite numerous invitations to do so, or engage with UNFPA despite their work in China to end coercive abortions.

As in years past, the State Department based this year’s Kemp-Kasten determination against UNFPA on a posted program document – edited and approved by the United States – that lists UNFPA’s “partnership” with China’s Ministry of Health. You neglect to link any such partnership to violations of the provision. Partnerships between the Chinese Ministry of Health and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services do not appear to trigger a Kemp-Kasten violation.12

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https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/countries/china/default.htm
As a member of UNFPA’s Executive Board, the U.S. Government helped shape and approve UNFPA’s current China workplan, stating upon approval in 2015 “[o]ur delegation welcomed the opportunity to provide comments on the draft [China] country program upon its return [from a visit to UNFPA’s Office in China] and also appreciated UNFPA’s willingness to consider our proposed amendments. The U.S. supports the priorities outlined in the UNFPA’s 8th Country Program... [during its recent visit, the U.S. delegation observed the positive impact of UNFPA’s rights-based programming in China.]”

The State Department has not stated what – if anything – has changed in the current workplan to trigger a negative determination. The U.S. is the only UN Member State that has ever raised concerns about UNFPA’s work in China.

In the midst of a global refugee and humanitarian crisis, this determination inexplicably extends to UNFPA’s work in emergency settings, depriving women in places like Syria, Yemen, and Venezuela from accessing critical family planning, prenatal care, safe childbirth services, and protection from violence. In many cases, UNFPA is the only organization that operates in these areas. Prior to the 2017 determination, the U.S. was the second largest contributor to UNFPA’s humanitarian efforts.

It remains difficult to reconcile the Administration’s prohibition on funding for UNFPA with its stated dedication to “empower women to participate fully in civic and economic life.” With 214 million women of reproductive age in developing regions facing an unmet need for modern contraceptives, cutting off U.S. assistance to UNFPA will undermine the Administration’s stated objective to empower women. Sexual and reproductive health care is health care. It is foundational to any person’s ability to live a healthy, safe, and full life. Denying this care stands in stark contrast to our values as Americans and turns our backs on the world’s women and girls. As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of UNFPA, we should be expanding support for their work, not decimating it.

We call on you to immediately reverse this decision and answer the following questions:

1. What evidence justifies the serious allegation that UNFPA supports or participates in coercive abortion in China?
2. President George W. Bush’s Administration sent an independent team to investigate UNFPA’s work in China and found no evidence that it was in violation of the Kemp-Kasten Amendment. Will the Trump Administration commit to conducting a site visit of the UNFPA Office in China to provide evidence, if any, for its allegations? If not, why?
3. Did the Administration consider UNFPA’s positive contributions in providing family planning and maternal health, eradicating gender-based violence, and training health care workers when making this decision?

4. Officials from the State Department and USAID promised to "consult closely with UNFPA to carefully assess whether UNFPA's programs may continue to warrant the [funding] restriction in future years." Can you describe the close consultation with UNFPA you committed to undertake?

5. Much of the Kemp Kasten determination cites history and policies of the Government of China. Have you raised these concerns with the Chinese government directly?

Sincerely,

Jackie Speier  Diana DeGette  Barbara Lee
Member of Congress  Member of Congress  Member of Congress

Nita Lowey  Lois Frankel
Member of Congress  Member of Congress
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Jän Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Deb Haaland
Member of Congress

David Trone
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Susan Wild
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress
Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

Adam Smith  
Member of Congress

Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress

Donna E. Shalala  
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress
Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Katie Hill
Member of Congress

Brad Sherman
Member of Congress

Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

John Yarmuth
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Tom Malinowski
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

Sean Casten
Member of Congress

Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress
Sharice L. Davids  
Member of Congress

Susie Lee  
Member of Congress

Ben Ray Luján  
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke  
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Salud O. Carbajal  
Member of Congress

Ron Kind  
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

David Scott  
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer, Jr.  
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Ed Case  
Member of Congress
Susan A. Davis
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Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress

Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

Wm Lacy Clay
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Terri A. Sewell
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Norma J. Torres
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Frederica S. Wilson
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David N. Cicilline
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Gerald E. Connolly
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A. Donald McEachin  
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan  
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Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress

Lizzie Fletcher  
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Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress

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Kathy Castor  
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Suzanne Bonamici  
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Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez  
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Bradley S. Schneider
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Ayanna Pressley
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Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal
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Lisa Blunt Rochester
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Hakeem Jeffries
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Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

Ed Perlmutter
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Pete Aguilar
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress
Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress

Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Al Lawson  
Member of Congress

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David E. Price  
Member of Congress

Dave Loebsack  
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Al Green  
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Antonio Delgado  
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Jason Crow  
Member of Congress