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No. 2-2/101

The President of the Republic of Poland

Mr. Andrzej Duda

First Lady of Poland

Mrs. Agata Kornhauser-Duda

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Association "MARTA Centre"

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Honourable President Andrzej Duda,

MARTA Centre is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that has worked in the field of women's rights protection for 20 years, supporting women in Latvia – non-citizens and migrants, low income and unemployed women, and female victims of human trafficking and domestic violence. MARTA Centre, in addition to providing practical support (psychological, legal, and social) to victims of violence and human trafficking, actively works on improving the State's legal framework regarding these issues. We also work on violence prevention by engaging youth to prevent them from becoming victims and/or perpetrators of violence. MARTA Centre routinely cooperates with other NGOs and the respective public authorities at the local, national, and international level to safeguard the human rights of women and raise awareness of the significance of the issue.

It has come to our attention that the Republic of Poland plans to withdraw from the *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*. We are writing to encourage Poland to follow through with the full implementation of the Convention to help women who suffer from domestic violence. After years of experience in working with domestic violence victims, we have come to the conclusion that the tools and monitoring mechanisms provided in the convention are crucial for combating violence, providing victims with the necessary support, and changing societal views on domestic violence as only a family issue.

Poland, with the ratification of *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence* had set an example to follow. Latvia has been lagging behind with this ratification, as well as, with understanding and acceptance that domestic violence is a

grave issue in our society. The sooner, we admit that this problem exists the sooner we can start working on changing it. Poland's ratification of convention was a clear sign that your country was willing to move forward and give victims of domestic violence a chance for a justice and better life. In Latvia, opponents argue that the Convention endangers traditional values, but we are confident that violence against women and domestic violence in any form are not a tradition in Latvia nor Poland.

Recognizing the work of the MARTA Centre team and the women we have supported, we kindly ask the Republic of Poland to remain among the countries that have ratified the Council of Europe Convention and continue working fiercely towards combating domestic violence and all forms of gender based violence.

Respectfully,

Iluta Lace

In the name of all the team of MARTA

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