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SUBJECT: Proposal for a Charter on the Rights of the Unborn Child

In the early 1900s, children had no legal rights and had to endure the worst of the atrocities of World War I. In 1922, Eglantyne Jebb, the founder of *Save the Children*, had the foresightedness to write to the United Nations to seek recognition of the rights of the child. Thus, the first Charter on the rights of children was presented.

However, the journey towards recognition of children's rights was long. The international Convention on the Rights of the Child was signed only in 1989; to date, it has been ratified by 196 countries. The Preamble to said Convention declares that the child needs "appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth".

In 2018, the Members of the *Comitato per la Carta dei Diritti dei Concepiti* (Committee for the Rights of the Unborn Child), of which I am the Representative, consider that the historical moment has come to recognize the rights of the unborn child, without any discrimination, in light of the findings of embryological research and prenatal life studies (in both biological and psychological terms), and the ongoing debates in the fields of ethics and bioethics.

The suffering proven to take place following abortion demonstrates that the unborn child, as a human being, is worthy of protection. Abortion cannot be considered merely a surgical procedure like any other, because it involves two parties and, for the mother, entails a feeling of deep longing for her aborted child.

In addition, several women have testified as to the attempted abortions they experienced during the earliest months of their lives.

Because of the current legal vacuum, unborn children – albeit human beings – are treated as mere "objects" and are subjected to adults' most disparate desires. News reports tell stories of unborn children being abandoned for decades in deep freezing facilities (as there are no legally established deadlines), discarded as waste, or used for commercial purposes or scientific experiments. In addition, the issue of whether they

may be implanted into the womb of an adoptive mother is as yet wholly unsolved, given the absence of established parameters even for the judiciary called upon to decide questions relating to the unborn.

Such arbitrary forms of mistreatment violate the right to life, health and harmonious development of the unborn child as a human being, and infringe the right to the dignity of one's personal life.

For these reasons, we wish to submit to this Assembly, through its President, the Charter on the Rights of the Unborn Child, with the aim of seeking a discussion on and adoption of an international legal instrument to protect unborn children, a category of human beings that currently does not enjoy legal protection despite the findings resulting from the progress of scientific research.

THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE
UNBORN CHILD

Virginia Lalli