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Rt Hon. Dame Diana Johnson MP
Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee
House of Commons
London
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Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Combating Violence Against Women and Girls and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)

Dear Diana,

I am writing to inform you as Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee that the UK has this week commenced the ratification proceedings for the Council of Europe Convention on Combating Violence Against Women and Girls and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).

The UK signed the Istanbul Convention in 2012 to signal our strong commitment to tackling crimes which disproportionately affect women and girls. The Convention includes a large number of articles which require signatory states to take certain actions to combat, for example, domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking and so-called 'honour'-based abuse. While we have for many years been compliant with the vast majority of the articles in the Convention, there has to date been a handful of issues for which we had to await the passage and implementation of legislation before we could be in the position of full compliance with the Convention, which is (subject to any reservations made) a necessary condition for ratification. However, I am now pleased to confirm that all those legislative barriers to ratification have been removed and that the UK is now in a position to ratify the Convention.

On Tuesday the Home Secretary made a Written Ministerial Statement to Parliament confirming that the UK will commence the ratification process for the Istanbul Convention. Furthermore, in line with the provisions of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, the Government has laid a copy of the Convention before Parliament as a Command Paper, alongside an Explanatory Memorandum. Both Houses will have 21 joint sitting days to consider ratification of this Convention.

I know that we both share a deep commitment to tackling violence against women and girls, and I am sure that you will welcome this key step on the road towards the UK's ratification of this landmark instrument.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RM', with a small dot at the end.

Rachel Maclean MP

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