National Organization for Women

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President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama,

On behalf of our 500,000 members and contributing supporters, the National Organization for Women is writing today to ask you to make a commitment to lead an effort to ratify the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Women's Rights Treaty. Thirty years after having helped to draft the treaty, the United States cannot continue to be the only industrialized nation left to ratify CEDAW. Ratification will signal to the rest of the world that the U.S. intends to resume its leadership in the international human rights community.

CEDAW has helped to bring about great achievements in other countries, including eliminating discriminatory divorce laws, recognizing the right of women to own property and wages after marriage and making significant progress towards the elimination of violence against women. By ratifying CEDAW we can advance the basic human rights of women in our own country while standing in solidarity with millions around the world who work to improve women's lives.

As you are aware, women in the U.S. continue to be disadvantaged by discrimination and violence in all its forms. Women are still not paid comparably nor represented proportionately in top leadership positions. Ratification of the Women's Rights Treaty would signal your administration's intent to work towards elimination of discrimination and to reduce violence against women. Urging that the Senate begin review of a clean CEDAW -- free of the 11 disabling Reservations, Understandings, and Declarations (RUDs) -- will be an affirmative indication that you support a robust, unrestricted treaty. NOW sponsored an expert review of the proposed restrictions on CEDAW; the analysis found that these RUDs are *inappropriate, objectionable, undesirable* or *unnecessary*.

We hope that you will communicate to the Senate your administration's support for immediate ratification of CEDAW. U.S. women have endured denials of their basic human rights long enough -- please do not make them wait any longer.

Sincerely,

Terry O'Neill

Terry O'Neill
President