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For Immediate Release

SAC: The Department of Political Science, St. Aloysius College (Autonomous), Mangaluru organized an international webinar titled, "Reproductive Choice of Women: A Fundamental Right" under the initiative of the National Commission of Women (NCW), India for better implementation of the existing policies, scheme, programs, or projects relating to welfare and empowerment of women. The international webinar was held on Wednesday 24th November 2021 from 9.00 am to 3.30 pm in hybrid modes—offline mode at Sanidhya and through YouTube and Zoom platforms.

Through this webinar the interactions aimed to gather key inputs on what obstructs the realization of reproductive choice of women and probably identify communities that are largely affected on grounds of religion, caste, or community to facilitate policy formulation at the concerned level of administration. Hence the webinar aimed to spread of sufficient awareness through the target group—adolescent boys and girls, adults, teachers, students, representatives of local administration, members of NGO and the general public.

Rev Dr Praveen Martis SJ, Principal of St. Aloysius College (Autonomous), Mangaluru in his presidential message during the inaugural session said that importance should be given to acceptance of women's rights as rights and not as women's fight for rights.

Dr. Ute Ritz Deutch Instructor at SUNY Cortland, State University of New York, United States, and Area Coordinator of New York State at Amnesty International USA gave the inaugural keynote address on the theme—" Reproductive Rights of Women: Human Rights Perspective". Dr. Duetch gave global overview on reproductive rights from a human rights perspective. Most of the abuses and violence against women including loss of rights for women find roots in culture and cultural beliefs. The understanding of women rights brings meaning to our lives. There is the need to recognize my body is my right and no person can violate my body and bodily freedoms from a woman's perspective.

Ms. Flavia Agnes, eminent women's rights lawyer of India, pioneer of the women's movement in India and co-founder of MAJLIS spoke exclusively on Reproductive Rights of Women in the context of general constitutional and legal provisions and focused in particular on the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act including its 2021 amendments. In her recommendations Ms. Flavia Agnes emphasized the need for reforming the MTP Act itself that takes into consideration time factor that affects the rape victims especially, sentiments of

the victims of rape and incest, consent of the woman/girl child and the doctor/s only among others.

Dr Rita Noronha, Director at the Centre for Development Studies & Education, Mangaluru spoke from the perspective of Gender Sensitization and its need. When gender related violence takes place, both women and men suffer; involvement of both the sexes in sensitization becomes important. Roots of gender discrimination like patriarchy and hierarchies, mindset of the people, sexual repression etc., needs to be addressed.

Dr Bijoya Roy, Assistant Professor at the Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi analyzed the topic from the perspective of Public Health. She explained various schemes on gender related public schemes. Dr. Roy analyzed statistically how various categories of the society like SCs, STs, etc., benefit from health facilities and services. She gave particular focus on menstrual hygiene, the discrimination meted out and the stigma attached.

As the resource persons gave their recommendations for national, state and local levels, the student participants in the student panel discussion gave their observations and also comments on the gender related behaviors and remarks at the local societal realm.

The international webinar was coordinated by Dr. Rose Veera D'Souza, Dean of Faculty of Arts and HOD, Political Science, who also gave the welcome speech and introduced the distinguished resource persons. Sessions were moderated by Ms. Joan Rita O'Brien, Dr. Deena D'Souza, and Dr. Shakila Hegde. Resource persons were formally introduced by Dr. Loveena Lobo, Ms. Savitha D'Souza, Dr. Priya Shetty. Mr. Alwin D'Souza summarized the entire sessions. The convenor of the program, Mrs. Maria Shaila D'Souza, Asst Prof. from Dept of Political Science gave the vote of thanks.

Our Esteemed Panellists and the themes they Address:

1. Dr. Ute Ritz-Deutch, Ph.D., Instructor at SUNY Cortland, State University of New York, United States, and Area Coordinator of New York State at Amnesty International USA
Theme: Reproductive Rights of Women: Human Rights Perspective- **KEYNOTE**
2. Dr Rita Noronha, Director, Centre for Development Studies & Education, Mangaluru.
Theme: Reproductive Rights of Women – An Area for Gender Sensitization
3. Dr Bijoya Roy, Assistant Professor at the Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi
Theme: Reproductive rights and Public Health
4. Ms. Flavia Agnes, women's rights lawyer, pioneer of the women's movement in India and co-founder of MAJLIS
Theme: Reproductive Rights of Women & Indian Constitution

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