**Sample letter to ministries to advocate for ratification of the Istanbul Convention – to be sent to Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

[Date]

**Subject: ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)**

Dear minister,

We, [name of organisation], are writing to your office in relation to the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). As national council of persons with disabilities, and together with the **European Disability Forum**, umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities that defends the interests of over 100 million persons with disabilities in Europe, to which we are member, we are deeply concerned that the government still has not ratified the Istanbul Convention, despite signing it on [date of signature – it can be found here: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210/signatures> ].

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations in our world today. 1 in 3 women experience violence in her lifetime. While we do lack disability desegregated data, statistics available show that women with disabilities are 2 to 5 times more likely to be victims of violence than non-disabled women and are subjected to other forms of abuse such as sterilisation and abortion against their will. At national level, measures to prevent and combat violence are often limited, women and girls with disabilities are not aware of their rights and services for victims not accessible to them.

The Istanbul Convention has been welcomed by the women and disability movement as a harmonizing tool to prevent, combat, condemn and remedy gender-based and domestic violence. It has been ratified by 34 European countries, including 22 Member States of the EU.

The UN Committee on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, both ratified by [name of your country] called States that have not yet done so to urgently ratify the Convention. We join them in this call to **urge you to ratify and swiftly implement the Istanbul Convention by taking concrete measures to prevent, combat and remedy gender-based and domestic violence**. All these measures shall take into account the situation and needs of women and girls with disabilities, and fulfil the requirements of the EU Directive on victims’ rights (for instance in relation to accessibility of support services for victims).

Yours sincerely,

[Signature and name of your organisation]