

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

We, the undersigned Heads of United Nations organisations, are deeply concerned that violence against women and girls continues to be one of the most pervasive manifestations of discrimination against women and violations of human rights. Violence against women and girls is a universal phenomenon and its levels remain unacceptably high. As many as seven in ten women in various parts of the world report having experienced physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lifetime, most of them at the hands of intimate partners.

Violence against women and girls seriously affects their ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men and has devastating effects on many aspects of the lives of women and girls, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as their mental and physical health. Moreover, violence against women and girls has been found to be a cause and consequence of HIV. Beyond the impact on individuals, violence against women and girls has severe consequences on families, communities and societies, and results in significant economic and social costs for countries. It is an impediment to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other national and all internationally agreed development goals.

Women and girls are also subject to gender-motivated killings, sexual violence in conflict and non-conflict settings, including rape, female genital mutilations, and sexual harassment in the workplace, other institutions and public spaces, so called "honour" crimes, early, forced and child marriage, trafficking for sexual exploitation and other forms of verbal, psychological, emotional and physical and sexual abuse. It is widely acknowledged that women and girls who face multiple forms of discrimination, such as women and girls with disabilities, indigenous women and girls, women and girls from ethnic and other minorities and women living with HIV, are exposed to increased risk of violence, while violence can put women and girls at risk of acquiring HIV.

We recognize that violence against women and girls is being increasingly documented and addressed, including as a result of the efforts of the global civil society, including women's and child rights organisations around the globe. Women and girls must not be seen only as victims, but as agents of change and equal partners in ending discrimination and violence. To end violence against women and girls we must educate men and women and change gender stereotypes, attitudes and beliefs that condone violence and harmful constructions of masculinity. We must also promote gender equitable norms and behaviours and women's participation in decision-making. Efforts to prevent gender-based violence must be accelerated along with increased access to justice, including reparations, and access to comprehensive services, the empowerment of women and girls and the eradication of stigmatisation of survivors. This requires the adoption of approaches at different levels and engaging all segments of society, including dedicated work with men and boys. In order to create an enabling environment for women and girls to exercise their rights and live free of violence, legal and policy frameworks must be implemented, prevention measures developed, services and responses established and the evidence base to inform policies and programmes strengthened.

We call upon all governments to honour their obligations to end violence against women and girls as outlined in the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and their Optional Protocols and other human rights treaties. We also call on governments to implement, with adequate resources, the commitments made in the Beijing Platform for Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, Security Council resolution 1983, the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS and other relevant global and regional agreements. We strongly recommend that the eradication of violence against women and girls be prioritized at national, regional and international levels. Achieving gender equality, including through the elimination of all forms of violence against women, must be a central component of the post-2015 development agenda.

We, as leaders of the United Nations system, are committed to work together, and with regional and national partners, to end the scourge of violence against women and girls. Our commitment is reflected in our organizational priorities and strategies and through inter-agency initiatives such as the Secretary-General's *UNiTE to End Violence against Women Campaign*. Allocating financial and human resources to preventing and responding to violence against women and girls must be a priority for our development and humanitarian work. To take this forward we will work with governments, public and private institutions, professional bodies and civil society, drawing upon the expertise and commitment of women's rights organisations and networks.

Violence against women and girls can and should be prevented. The UN system stands ready to work in partnership and do its part. We should all aspire for a just world with equality between women and men and boys and girls and one where all women and girls live free of fear and violence.

Secretary-General



Executive Director UN Women



Administrator, UNDP



Director-General, UNESCO



Director-General, WHO



Director-General, ILO



Executive Director, UNODC



Executive Director, UNICEF



Executive Director, UNFPA



High Commissioner, OHCHR



Executive Director, UNAIDS

