

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY
FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
25 November 2007**

Violence against women continues to persist as one of the most heinous, systematic and prevalent human rights abuses in the world. It is a threat to all women, and an obstacle to all our efforts for development, peace and gender equality in all societies.

Many countries have made considerable progress in changing laws, policies, practices and attitudes which in the past helped create a patchwork of impunity for this despicable offence. But there is so much left to do to tear down the veil of tolerance which still sometimes surrounds it.

Over the past year, our efforts have taken on new urgency. Following my predecessor's in-depth study in 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a landmark resolution to strengthen efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women. The UN family is stepping up its activities at all levels -- from new initiatives by the Regional Commissions to better coordination and programming at the country level. Efforts are underway to raise public awareness, build political will and provide effective responses. And we are working on proposals to help States assess the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women, and respond to it more effectively.

To bring all these efforts together, I have decided to spearhead a system-wide campaign through 2015 for the elimination of violence against women. The campaign will focus on three key areas: global advocacy; UN leadership by example; and strengthened partnerships at the national and regional levels to support the work of Governments, civil society, the private sector and others. I have proposed that the General Assembly devote an agenda item every year to considering the question of violence against women. And I have called on the Security Council to establish a mechanism dedicated to monitoring violence against women and girls, within the framework of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

In all this, I believe we can draw support from proposals to strengthen the UN's gender architecture, as presented by the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence. I believe we could significantly advance our cause by replacing several current structures with one dynamic UN entity. Such a new body should be able to call on all of the UN system's resources in the work to empower women and realize gender

equality worldwide. It should mobilize forces of change at the global level, and inspire enhanced results at the country level.

Violence against women is always a violation of human rights; it is always a crime; and it is always unacceptable. Let us take this issue with the deadly seriousness that it deserves -- not only on this International Day, but every day.