

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
New York, 25 November 2009**

In the ten years since the General Assembly designated 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the circle of engagement has widened. More groups and individuals, including men and boys, are getting involved in efforts to prevent and address this heinous violation of women's human rights. There has also been significant progress at the national level as many countries have adopted laws and comprehensive action plans.

However, much work lies ahead. In every country, women and girls continue to be plagued by violence, causing tremendous suffering. Such violence undermines development, generates instability, and makes peace that much harder to achieve. We must demand accountability for the violations, and take concrete steps to end impunity. We must listen to and support the survivors.

Our goal is clear: an end to these inexcusable crimes -- whether it is the use of rape as a weapon of war, domestic violence, sex trafficking, so-called "honour" crimes or female genital mutilation/cutting. We must address the roots of this violence by eradicating discrimination and changing the mindsets that perpetuate it.

The "UNiTE to End Violence Against Women" campaign that I launched last year is galvanizing action across the United Nations system. It calls for all countries to put in place, by the year 2015, strong laws, multi-sectoral action plans, preventive measures, data collection, and systematic efforts to address sexual violence in conflict situations. I invite governments, organizations and individuals to join us in this Campaign. I have also just launched a Network of Men Leaders to strengthen our advocacy.

The UN General Assembly's support for the creation of a new gender equality entity will also bolster our work. The new entity will promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, and hold the UN system itself accountable for supporting measures to eliminate discrimination against women and end violence against them.

Women around the world are the very linchpin keeping families, communities, and nations together. On this International Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to women's human rights; let us invest more resources in countering this violence; and let us do all it takes to end these horrific assaults once and for all.