

PRESS RELEASE
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Until 25 February
10:30 am, New York time

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launches campaign to end violence against women

New York, 25 February -- United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is launching today a multi-year campaign to intensify action to end violence against women and girls.

At least one out of every three women in the world is likely to be beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime, according to UN estimates, and one in five women will become a victim of rape or attempted rape. Trafficking, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, dowry murder, honour killings and female infanticide are other widespread aspects of the problem.

“Violence against women and girls makes its hideous imprint on every continent, country and culture,” said the Secretary-General. “It is time to focus on the concrete actions that all of us can and must take to prevent and eliminate this scourge -- Member States, the United Nations family, civil society and individuals -- women and men. It is time to break through the walls of silence, and make legal norms a reality in women’s lives.”

The campaign will aim to mobilize public opinion to ensure that policy makers at the highest level work to prevent and eradicate violence against women. A key target will be to secure political will and increased resources from governments, international institutions, United Nations entities, the private sector and other donors for policies and programmes to tackle the problem. The Secretary-General is calling on world leaders, men and women, to lead national campaigns to end violence against women. The growing commitment of men to prevent and combat violence against women will be leveraged, and the campaign will welcome and encourage the active involvement of men and boys, recognizing the critical role they must play.

Running from 2008 to 2015 -- to coincide with the target date of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – the campaign will focus on three key areas: global advocacy; United Nations leadership by example; and strengthened efforts and partnerships at the national, regional and international levels. The link to the MDGs reflects the fact that violence against women constrains the active involvement of women in development and is seen as a serious obstacle to the achievement of all internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

Building on Momentum

The campaign will harness the existing strong momentum in the General Assembly and the Security Council to take action against all forms of violence against women, including rape in conflict and post-conflict situations. In recent years, Governments have made significant advances at international, regional and national levels by establishing legal and policy frameworks, covering many different forms of violence and seeking to end impunity. At the 2005 World Summit, world leaders pledged to redouble efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and, following the release of an in-depth study by the Secretary-General, further impetus was generated by two General Assembly resolutions (61/143 and 62/133) on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, adopted in December 2006 and 2007 respectively, and a resolution on rape and sexual violence (62/134) adopted in December 2007. However, much more needs to be done.

The campaign will build upon the decades of work by women activists, women's groups and other civil society organizations who, as agents of change, continue to lead the struggle to expose and counter violence. Their determination and hard work has placed the issue on the global agenda and deepened understanding of the nature and scope of violence against women and girls and its impact on the survivors, their families, communities and countries.

Strengthening the role of the United Nations in ending violence and creating an organizational culture within the UN system that rejects violence against women and girls and takes action to prevent and address it are also important aims of the campaign. The ongoing reform of the UN, aimed at enhanced coherence, has created an enabling environment for the UN System to work together on this issue. UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict -- a collaborative initiative of 12 UN entities -- and other efforts, such as UNIFEM's "Say NO to violence against women" on-line signature campaign, demonstrate this new approach.

Launch Events

The launch of the Secretary-General's campaign will take place during the opening meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, to a high-level audience of Government Ministers and Ambassadors, as well as numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and representatives of the UN System. Along with the Secretary-General, speakers will include Ambassador Léo Mérorès (Haiti), President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA); and Taina Bien Aimé, a representative from Equality Now, a women's NGO.

A press conference with Rachel Mayanja, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, is scheduled for noon, and an interactive dialogue on the role and responsibility of men in preventing violence against women is planned for 1:15 p.m. Speakers include Todd Minerson, Executive Director of the White Ribbon Campaign, an organization working with men to end violence against women; Captain Aimable Mushabe, a Rwandan military officer implementing measures to protect women against violence; Prateek Suman Awasthi, a young activist working with Indian youth and women on this issue; and Kevin Powell, author of seven books, including *The Confessions of a Recovering Misogynist*. The discussion will be moderated by Michealene Risley, women's advocate, author and award-winning documentarian.

For further information or for interviews, please contact:

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Please see contacts for UN System and other information at: <http://endviolence.un.org>

Launch events will be webcast at www.un.org/webcast