

Violence against women is an issue that cannot wait

This was the message that UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon delivered at the opening of the 52nd Commission on the Status of Women in New York on 25 February 2008. He launched a global campaign which aims to involve the UN, governments and civil society in working together to:-

UNite to End Violence Against Women



All those who attended the official opening of the CSW were impressed and motivated by Ban Ki-Moon's obvious passion for this campaign.

"Violence against women is an issue that cannot wait. At least one out of every three women is likely to be beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Through the practice of prenatal selection, countless others are denied the right to even exist. No country, no culture, no woman, young or old is immune to this scourge. Far too often, the crimes go unpunished, the perpetrators go free."

He spoke feelingly about his visits to conflict-torn areas –

"I have spoken with women who have endured horrific forms of violence. I will forever be haunted by their suffering – but equally, I will always be inspired by their courage. This is a campaign for them - for the women and girls who have the right to live free of violence, today and in the future."

The Secretary General believes that gender inequality is hampering progress towards the millennium targets. Violence against women compounds the enormous social and economic toll on families, communities and nations. The new campaign is scheduled to run until 2015 to coincide with the target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. He told delegates that there was no blanket approach to fighting violence against women and that each nation must devise its own strategy. But he declared that –

"There is one universal truth, applicable to all countries, cultures and communities: violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable."

Ban Ki-Moon undertook to personally approach world leaders to spur action through national campaigns. All States will be urged to review applicable laws and revise them or enact new ones to ensure that violence against women is always criminalised. He wants to galvanise the UN system to provide stronger, more effective support to all those involved. He called on women's groups, young people and men around the world, Member States and the private sector to work together to ensure the new initiative succeeds.

To mark the launch of the campaign, the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) held a panel discussion on the "Role and responsibility of men in preventing violence against Women". UNIFEM sponsored two of the panellists: Captain Aimable Mushabe, a Rwandan military officer implementing measures to protect women against violence, and Ms Anne Sosin, who received a grant from the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.

To read more about the 2008 session of the Commission on the Status of Women go to www.unifem.org/campaigns/csw/2008/

You can help the new campaign today by making an online donation to the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women which is managed by UNIFEM - just click on the 'donation' box on our Home page