

Opening Statement
by
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Workshop for UN entities on violence against women
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by extending a warm welcome to all of you, especially to those who have traveled from abroad, and to thank you for accepting my invitation to participate in this workshop for United Nations entities on violence against women. I also thank the Division for the Advancement of Women for organizing this workshop in conjunction with its preparation of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women.

The study, which was mandated by General Assembly in December 2003, requested that it should encompass all forms of violence against women, and cover data and statistics, causes, consequences and costs of violence against women, as well as good practices in preventing and combating it.

Preparation of the study is a unique opportunity to undertake a comprehensive process of consultations with relevant stakeholders to enhance visibility, increase awareness and political commitment to tackle all forms of violence against women and strengthen accountability. It is an opportunity to put in place better monitoring mechanism for implementation of commitments in the study's follow-up phase.

Consequently, the goals of the study are to:

- Highlight the persistence, and the unacceptability of all forms of violence against women, in all parts of the world,
- Strengthen political commitment and joint efforts of all stakeholders to prevent and eliminate violence against women, and
- Identify ways and means for better and more sustained and effective implementation of Government commitments and obligations to combat all forms of violence against women.

The General Assembly requested that the study be prepared in close collaboration with all relevant United Nations bodies, and throughout the process, colleagues from the United Nations system have been actively involved. Some 25 entities participate in the Task Force set up by the Division for the Advancement of Women, and several entities joined the Division in convening two expert group meetings earlier this year. We have received feedback and comments, as well as studies, research and other findings from many of you.

UN entities, including those represented here today, implement specific programmes on violence against women or include efforts to combat this scourge within the framework of their overall mandates and objectives. The significant interest and participation at this workshop is also indicative of the increased attention paid by the United Nations system to violence against women in its many different forms, as well as to the linkages with, and impact of violence against women on the achievement of other goals. The increasing attention corresponds with the efforts of intergovernmental and expert bodies such as the UN General Assembly and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to prevention and elimination of violence against women.

The scope of the system's work includes research, normative and policy development, provision of services and support to victims of violence, capacity-building, implementation of advocacy and awareness raising activities, as well as extension of funding for innovative activities around the world. Such measures are carried out at national, regional and global level, in cooperation with Governments, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders.

The Inter-agency Network on Women and Gender Equality serves as a forum for the exchange of information, coordination of policy and programming approaches, and multi-entity collaboration in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. One of our most recent examples of excellent coordination and cooperation is the development of a UN system-wide action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325. The plan includes actions for preventing and responding to gender-based violence in armed conflict, as well as to sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff, related personnel and partners. The plan was spearheaded by the Inter-agency Network, and I am committed to working with all entities of the United Nations system to see to its full and systematic implementation.

Another example of multi-entity collaboration are the "Guidelines for gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian settings – focusing on prevention and response to sexual violence," as developed by the Inter-agency Standing Committee Task Force on Gender and Humanitarian Assistance. They represent a practical tool for use by United Nations entities and partners in concrete settings to support women victims of violence. They showcase the kind of results we can achieve through collaborative action.

Let me also mention the very active participation of representatives of United Nations entities in the expert group meetings held in April and May of this year that prepared inputs for the study, as well as in the consultation on the study that took place on 6 and 7 September here in New York.

The Secretary-General's study provides the impetus for enhancing such cooperation.

I believe that, as a system, we can strengthen our response to violence against women as a human rights violation and an obstacle to the achievement of gender equality and other goals of peace and development. There is room for developing greater synergies in our work, and for more systematic collaboration and information exchange. Such enhanced inter-action should allow us to respond more effectively to the persistence of violence against women in all its forms, and ensure that we focus consistently on preventing and remedying such violence, in all

programme areas, from a policy and operational perspective. Enhanced mechanisms and frameworks for cooperation and coordination will strengthen our capacity for effective follow-up to the study and its recommendations, which will be submitted to the General Assembly next fall.

We have the opportunity to build on past and ongoing initiatives to combat violence against women. In order to do so, we need to take a critical look at the content and scope of our current activities, and how we want to move forward.

During this workshop, we should assess the current status of our work on violence against women; seek to identify gaps in the policy and operational response of the United Nations system, and areas of potential overlap and inconsistencies in approaches. We should address the question of resources that are currently available for activities to combat violence against women, and we should seek to identify strategies for ensuring a more consistent response to all forms and manifestations of violence against women by the United Nations system.

This workshop should result in a more comprehensive and well-coordinated system-wide response to violence against women, with a larger number of entities working more systematically on combating violence against women.

Specifically, we should agree on:

- Areas that require more attention, and the steps needed to achieve this;
- Opportunities for enhancing synergies in the work on violence against women across the UN system;
- Measures to enhance the resource base; and
- Mechanisms – institutional linkages and frameworks – for better collaboration, coordination and information exchange. I believe it will also be critical for us to consider how we can elevate attention to combating violence against women to the highest levels of leadership within our individual entities and the United Nations system as a whole, in particular in the framework of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

All United Nations entities have a stake in preventing and eliminating violence against women. The 2005 World Summit outcome document underlined intergovernmental commitment to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and the girl child. I encourage you to think strategically and creatively about the steps we, as a system, need to take to support realization of this commitment.

Thank you once again for your participation. I look forward to fruitful and productive discussions over the next two and a half days and offer you my full support.
