



UNITED NATIONS COMMEMORATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2009

Men and boys must play a bigger role in ending violence against women and girls in Somalia

Nairobi, 8 March 2009 – Somali men – both young and old – must be engaged in the struggle to end violence against women and girls.

In Somalia, many women and girls are silent victims of violence, human trafficking, beatings, rape, child marriage, and female genital mutilation. Violence causes death, sickness, disability and trauma. The majority of the women and girls lack proper avenues to report their plight, and many remain silent out of fear of being ostracized or killed by their own families. Violence is too often shrouded in silence and too seldom punished.

“Violence against women and girls is not a women’s issue, it is an issue that concerns and diminishes us all. No custom, tradition or religion can justify cruel and degrading treatment”, says Mark Bowden, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia.

This year’s International Women’s Day, celebrated globally on 8 March 2009, provides an opportunity to call men and women to action and public dialogue on violence against women and girls. Violence against women and girls is not only a gross violation of human rights, but also has enormous social and economic costs, and undermines the contribution of women to development, peace and security. Furthermore, it defies international humanitarian law and poses a serious threat to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

The government, civil society, women’s organisations, men’s organisations, youth groups, the private sector, the media and individual men and women must join forces with the UN in addressing this issue. We need to combat attitudes and behaviour that condone, tolerate, excuse or ignore violence committed against women and girls. National laws should be properly and effectively enforced to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls.

The UN continues to support local campaigns and social mobilization efforts in Somalia that aim at ending and preventing violence against women and girls. This includes providing access and support to abused women and girls through strengthening existing referral systems and championing zero-tolerance of violence against women and girls.

For more information please visit www.endviolence.un.org