



## UNITED NATIONS - PRESS RELEASE

### International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

#### *“Be a Champion: Prevent Violence and Discrimination against Women and Girls in Afghanistan”*

**KABUL, 25 November 2014** - Today marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW), followed by 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. The Day is commemorated around the world giving individuals and groups a chance to mobilize and call attention to the urgent need to end violence against women and girls.

“Afghan women and girls must be able to fully enjoy their freedom and contribute to the building of the nation,” said the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan, Nicholas Haysom. “There should be no place in Afghanistan for violence and discrimination against women and girls, and every effort is needed to end the impunity for such violent crimes.”

In Afghanistan, violence against women and girls remains endemic, and constitutes a serious violation of human rights impeding women’s full realization of their civil, political, social, cultural, economic and development rights. The Government of Afghanistan has international and national legal obligations to end violence against women and girls, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as the 2009 Elimination of Violence against Women Law (EVAW Law). An encouraging development is the Government’s recent approval of the National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security which reaffirms Afghanistan’s commitment to protect women and girls from all types of violence, particularly in situation of conflict. Other positive steps are the Government’s establishment of EVAW prosecution units in 18 provinces focused on improved enforcement of the EVAW Law. Last week, the country’s first-ever Gender-based Violence (GBV) Treatment Protocol was introduced to strengthen health sector response to GBV.

In her visit to Afghanistan earlier this month, Rashida Manjoo, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, urged accountability for all crimes committed against women and girls in the country. She stressed that “the pervasive levels of gender-based violence and an ever-present climate of fear has had a disproportionate impact on the promotion, protection and fulfillment of human rights of women and girls.”

Despite advances made, violence remains a reality for many women and girls in Afghanistan with severe consequences for their well-being and enjoyment of their basic human rights. Slow and uneven implementation of the EVAW law continues to result in weak enforcement of legal protections leaving far too many women victimized twice – first when they are subjected to violence, and second when they are denied access to services and justice.

The implementation of the EVAW Law must be fully reinforced. It is also essential that several law reform initiatives, including revision of the Penal Code, protect gains made for women's rights in the last decade together with initiatives that are gender responsive and that promote justice and equality.

"It is time for action when more than 80 per cent of women in Afghanistan face violence in their lifetime. We need to strengthen implementation of EVAW law. We also need to place more focus on preventing violence against women and girls, which requires the engagement of all segments of society, and especially men and boys as partners in gender equality and respectful relationships," said Elzira Sagynbaeva, UN Women Country Representative in Afghanistan.

Eliminating violence against women is the primary responsibility of the Government of Afghanistan and Afghan authorities. The United Nations, civil society and individual women and men also have key roles in advancing efforts to end violence against Afghan women and girls. This day, and the 16 Days of Activism launched today is an opportunity for the Government of Afghanistan and its partners to consolidate and expand the gains made in protecting women and girls from violence. The 16 Days Campaign also provides an opportunity for all concerned to focus on addressing the root causes of violence against women in Afghanistan such as poverty, exclusion from decision making and limited access to health, education and economic opportunities.

The United Nations is fully committed to support the Government of Afghanistan and civil society in concrete actions to realize the rights of all women and girls, allowing them to live lives free of violence.

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