



## PRESS RELEASE

# International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women

**“Say NO to Violence Against Women and Girls and Create a Positive Legacy for Afghanistan’s Youth”**

**KABUL, 24 November 2013-** The International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) is commemorated tomorrow – followed by the 16 Days Activism on Gender-Based Violence. United Nations in Afghanistan stresses the critical need to engage the country’s youth in ending violence against women and girls. During this campaign, UN agencies and their national partners implement several activities that promote awareness on EVAW, mobilize communities, social leaders, and particularly engage men, boys and youths as actors for change, promoting their own capacity to advocate for prevention, activism, and societal transformation.

“Progress in ending harmful practices, intimidation and violence against women and girls can enable them to fully and actively participate in the country’s political and economic development. This contributes to improvements in the lives of all Afghans. Moreover, in recent months Afghanistan has witnessed several cases of violence, including abduction and targeted killings by anti-Government elements aimed at female Government officials and public figures. Such deplorable attacks must stop as they discourage women and girls from pursuing careers in the public arena for fear of losing their lives,” said Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

More than 4,000 cases of violence against women and girls were reported by 33 provinces to the Ministry of Women Affairs in 2010-2012. Although Afghanistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW) in March 2003 and important steps have been taken nationally and locally to ensure women’s human rights, much more needs to be done.

“It is essential that the Government of Afghanistan and the international community stand by their commitments to improve access to justice for all, in particular women, by ensuring that the Constitution and other fundamental laws are enforced, and that the Eliminating Violence Against Women Law is fully implemented,” said Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladdottir, UN Women Country Representative in Afghanistan.

“Afghanistan can only become a peaceful and prosperous nation with the participation of women in all spheres of life. We encourage all young Afghans to speak up and act if they witness any incident of violence against women. It is in their hands to make Afghanistan a better country for all,” said Alvaro Rodriguez, UNDP Country Director in Afghanistan.

“Violence against women and girls must never be accepted, excused or tolerated. The UN will continue to work with the Afghan Government and partners to bring to reality the right of every Afghan girl and woman to enjoy a life free of violence,” said Dr. Annette Sachs Robertson, UNFPA Afghanistan Representative.

As Afghanistan enters a new era of sovereignty and self-reliance, it is imperative that the large population of young people is aware of its rights and obligations in order to be constructive and active contributors to the nation's development. As agents of change, they must be empowered through information, action, and the opportunity to participate.

"Through UN-Habitat's People's Process, women are now playing a key role at the community level in decisions regarding health, education, livelihoods and the upgrading of informal settlements. Their leadership and stewardship promotes civic engagement and holds leaders at all levels accountable for their actions. This in turn improves transparency and supports good governance," said Peter Dalgish, UN-Habitat Country Representative for Afghanistan.

Bo Schack, UNHCR's Representative in Afghanistan, noted that "Gender Based Violence, discrimination and abuse are serious issues that concern Afghan women and girls, including returning refugees and IDPs in areas of high return and in IDP communities in Afghanistan. We are committed to supporting girls and boys by paving the ground for safe learning environment in the schools as awareness and knowledge are key to address violence against women and girls and create a positive legacy for Afghanistan's youth."

The United Nations remains committed to supporting the Government of Afghanistan in meeting its national and international obligations and commitments impacting women and girls and in particular ensuring that women have equal opportunities to participate in political and peace processes as well as in economic activities and other spheres of community and public life.

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