



GRP/2009/DSG.4
Geneva, 29 July 2009

**Commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
(25 November 2009)**

Dear Madam President,
Dear Mr. President,

Violence against women is an unacceptable reality which needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. It is among the most potent obstacles to the advancement of women and is a fundamental violation of their basic human rights. Moreover, it has enormous social and economic costs and seriously jeopardizes achievement of the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals.

In 2006, the Inter-Parliamentary Union adopted a resolution on the role of parliaments in combating violence against women (<http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/114/114-3.htm>). Since then, the IPU launched a campaign and a programme of work to support parliaments in their efforts and initiatives in that field.

The political consciousness that can be observed at the global level also provides unprecedented opportunities which parliamentarians must grasp in order to make quicker progress and effect genuine change in the lives of women in their respective countries. The United Nations Secretary-Generals' campaign *UNite to End Violence against Women*, which runs from 2008 to 2015, is but one example. One of the five objectives of that campaign is the adoption and implementation, in keeping with international standards, of national laws to tackle violence against women. The passage of laws and monitoring of their enforcement are at the heart of parliamentary work. In other words, combating violence against women will not become a reality without the active contribution of parliaments.

That is why we would like to encourage your parliament to mark the 10th anniversary of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women this coming 25 November by organizing some activity that could advocate for making violence against women a priority issue at the national level.

We take the liberty of attaching a Note listing objectives and proposed activities that your parliament may wish to consider when preparing for the Day. We also enclose copies of the IPU's recent publication *A Parliamentary Response to Violence against Women* (2009). We hope that this document will be useful to your parliament in helping to raise awareness about the urgent need to tackle this scourge.

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MARK THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ON 25 NOVEMBER

Proposals for Parliaments

Context

The statistics for violence against women paint an alarming picture. Worldwide, as many as one in two women experiences intimate partner violence and up to one in five experiences or is threatened with sexual assault. More than 80 per cent of trafficking victims are women. Up to 130 million women have been genitally mutilated. (*Backgrounder, UN Secretary-General's Campaign to End Violence against Women, 2008*)

Violence against women and girls takes many forms and is not limited to any culture, region or country, or to any specific group of women. It has enormous social and economic costs, and undercuts the contribution of women to development, peace and security, and human rights. Furthermore, it seriously jeopardizes achievement of the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals.

The time has come to put an end to this flagrant human rights violation. Parliaments and men and women parliamentarians together have a key role to play in achieving this goal.

"The Inter-Parliamentary Union calls upon governments, parliaments and non-governmental organizations to organize activities to promote public awareness of the problem of violence against women, including on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which is observed on 25 November each year"
IPU resolution, 114th Assembly, 12 May 2006, para.6.

Objectives

2009 marks the 10th anniversary of the formal proclamation by the United Nations of 25 November as International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The campaign theme this year is

Commit • Act • Demand: We CAN End Violence against Women!

Parliaments could celebrate 25 November 2009 by:

- Advocating for violence against women to be made a priority issue at the national level and taking action in this fight;
- Identifying what steps they can take to strengthen their effectiveness in combating violence against women;
- Sensitizing, building partnerships and contributing to the UN Secretary-General's UNite Campaign to End Violence against Women (2008-2015).

Proposed activities

Parliaments could organize some kind of event on 25 November (or as close thereto as feasible) such as:

- Holding a special debate in parliament on violence against women, including on legislation and policies to end this human rights violation;
- Adopting a parliamentary resolution or declaration marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women;