



International Women's Day 2008 – Message from UNIFEM

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On the occasion of International Women's Day, 8 March 2008

This year on International Women's Day we have an opportunity to break new ground in the struggle for women's rights and gender equality, including the urgent need to end violence against women in all of its forms.

On 25 February, the UN Secretary-General announced the United Nations campaign, [UNiTE to End Violence against Women](#). For more than three decades, women's rights advocates have been working to place the urgency of ending violence against women on every national, regional, and international agenda. That work took a huge step forward with the kick-off of the campaign and the Secretary-General's personal pledge to bring in men and world leaders. It is the kind of high-level commitment that is so badly needed. The campaign will add value and visibility to the efforts that governments, women's and other civil society organizations, UN and donor partners are making to combat gender-based violence and send the message that ending violence against women stands on par with other critical development goals.

In line with the Secretary-General's campaign, UNIFEM is expanding its advocacy and fundraising efforts on behalf of the [UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women](#), which UNIFEM manages on behalf of the UN system. The UN Trust Fund is a vital complement to our work in all regions and all contexts to end sexual and gender-based violence in women's lives, in both conflict and non-conflict situations. Its resource base has expanded significantly over the last year — from US\$3.5 million in 2006 to over US\$15 million in 2007. To build on this success and capitalize on the momentum from the Secretary-General's campaign, we have set an ambitious goal: raising US\$100 million a year by 2015.

We are also promoting a way for people everywhere to speak out and demand an end to violence against women. Last year, on November 25th, we initiated an Internet-based advocacy effort, [Say NO to Violence against Women](#), with UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman in the lead. Today, as more and more people add their names, we can see a growing movement of people who are demanding an end to violence, including governments, UN partners and celebrities Catherine Deneuve and Hillary Swank. The entire cabinet of Senegal, led by President Abdoulaye Wade, [has signed on](#); the UN Deputy Secretary-General has lent her name; and people are signing from every corner of the globe. The signatures will be presented to the Secretary-General in November as an expression of widespread public support to his efforts.

The United Nations Campaign to End Violence against Women comes at a time when the world's leaders are renewing their commitment to financing for all national development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As a vital part of this, the Commission on the Status of Women, in its 52nd session, has taken up the issue of [Financing for Gender Equality](#). As the Secretary-General has stated, increased resources invested in achieving Millennium Development Goal 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment is central to achieving all other development goals. Investing in women and girls has a multiplier effect on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth.

In the months that follow, it is important that this forward action on ending violence against women and financing gender equality come together — to Finance an End to Violence against Women.

Financing efforts that will contribute to ending gender-based violence in all contexts is central to financing gender equality and, ultimately, financing development. Ending violence against women was a missing indicator in the MDGs, owing to the lack of comparable data. It is encouraging, therefore, that the United Nations has also committed to assist countries in efforts to generate the data needed to measure the extent of violence against women and girls. Together with proven evidence of what works and the financial and technical resources needed to support countries to meet the implementation challenge, there may indeed be an end in sight to the pandemic of violence against women and girls — and genuine progress on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies to foster women's empowerment and gender equality. Placing the advancement of women's human rights at the centre of all of its efforts, UNIFEM focuses its activities on reducing feminized poverty; ending violence against women; reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls; and achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war. For more information: UNIFEM, 304 East 45th Street, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10017. Tel: +1 212-906-6400. Fax: +1 212-906-6705.

Suomen UNIFEM on YK:n Naistenrahaston UNIFEMin kansallinen yhdistys, joka edistää naisten asemaa, osallistumista sekä ihmisoikeuksia. Suomen UNIFEM tukee YK:n Naistenrahaston toimintaa keräämällä sille varoja, jotka suunnataan kulloinkin valittuun kohteeseen. Suomen UNIFEM on myös YK:n ja naisnäkökulman asiantuntija kehitys ja tasa-arvokysymyksissä. Yhdistys järjestää keskustelutilaisuuksia ja seminaareja sekä julkaisee säännöllisesti ilmestyvää jäsenlehteä. Suomen UNIFEM on kaikille avoin kansalaisjärjestö, jolla on yli 2500 henkilöjäsentä ja nelisenkymmentä järjestöjäsentä. Lisätiedot: Suomen UNIFEM - Finlands UNIFEM, Töölöntorinkatu 2 B 00260 HELSINKI. Puh. (09) 694 0944.

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