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Top UN officials highlight youth leadership in ending violence against women



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon speaks at event to mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

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Top United Nations officials today called for engaging all of society, and especially young people, to end violence against women, a scourge that spans the globe and takes many forms, including rape, domestic violence and harassment at work.

“Whether in developing or developed countries, the pervasiveness of this unacceptable violence should shock us all,” [Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon](#) [said](#) at an event in New York to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

“Violence – and in many cases the mere threat of it – is one of the most significant barriers to women’s full equality,” he added.

This year’s Day, observed annually on 25 November, focuses on youth leadership in preventing and ending gender-based violence.

“Our challenge,” said Mr. Ban, “is to ensure that the message of ‘zero tolerance’ is heard far and wide. To do that, we must engage all of society – and especially young people – and in particular young men and boys.”

He highlighted the need to promote “healthy models of masculinity,” and in particular encourage young men and boys to become advocates for change.

“I urge governments and partners around the world to harness the energy, ideas and leadership of young people to help us to end this pandemic. Only then will we have a more just, peaceful and equitable world.”

In a separate [message](#) for the Day, Mr. Ban said the right of women and girls to live free of violence is “inalienable and fundamental” and enshrined in international human rights and humanitarian law.

It also lies at the heart of the “UNiTE to End Violence against Women” campaign that the Secretary-General launched in 2008 that has galvanized governments, civil society, the corporate sector, athletes, artists, women, men and young people around the world to end the pandemic.

Mr. Ban also urged governments and the private sector to increase their support to the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, which is marking 15 years of giving grants to support innovative regional, local and national projects.

The fund has delivered grants worth \$77 million to 339 initiatives in 126 countries and territories since it was established in 1997. However, demand for support continues to outstrip resources, the Secretary-General said, noting that this year alone, the fund has received more than 2,500 applications requesting nearly \$1.2 billion. Mr. Ban said an additional \$100 million in annual donations is needed.

The Executive Director of [UN Women](#), Michelle Bachelet, for her part, called on world leaders to mobilize political will and investment to ensure that women can live a life without violence.

“Violence against women is not solely a women’s issue,” she stated in her message for the Day. “It diminishes each and every one of us. We need to come together to end it. By coming together, by standing up against violence against women, we will come closer to peace, justice and equality.”

According to UN Women, 125 countries have specific laws that penalize domestic violence, and equality between women and men is guaranteed in 139 countries and territories. But women continue to be subjected to violence, with estimates indicating that up to six in 10 women have

suffered physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime, a majority from their husbands or partners.

Ms. Bachelet outlined 16 concrete policy actions to end violence against women, including revising laws, providing universal access to emergency services for survivors, engaging men and boys, and bringing perpetrators to justice.

In a related development, the UN released a [report](#) today stating that Afghanistan has a long way to go before its women are fully protected from violence and their equality is properly upheld through the landmark Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) law enacted two years ago.

The report, produced by the UN human rights office ([OHCHR](#)) and the UN mission in Afghanistan ([UNAMA](#)), makes 32 recommendations to the Government and its international partners to improve implementation of the law, including raising greater awareness of the law among Afghan women and men and within all levels of the Government.

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