

UN expert calls for strengthened cooperation to intensify efforts to eliminate violence against women

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International Day on the Elimination of Violence Against Women 25 November 2009

GENEVA -- The Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Rashida Manjoo, seizes the opportunity of the International Day on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25 November) to present her approach to the mandate, both in terms of thematic priorities and cooperation with other mechanisms, with a view to enhance efforts to eliminate violence against women.

“Significant progress achieved in recent years in the international legal response to violence against women has resulted in the explicit recognition of violence against women as a human rights concern. However, the reality on the ground shows that many forms and manifestations of violence against women remain endemic around the world, cutting across national boundaries, race, class, culture, tradition and religion. The consequences include the violation of dignity and also of the right to equality, non-discrimination, physical integrity and freedom from violence.”

“The protection, promotion and fulfillment of all rights require a holistic and intersectional approach. States have a responsibility to eliminate violence against women through numerous measures, including through legal and policy frameworks, through a responsive criminal justice system, through the provision of social services and also through economic empowerment policies. The due diligence standard requires States to promote the right to be free from all forms of violence, both private and public; and also to develop and implement legislation, policies and programmes that specifically address prevention, protection, prosecution and compensation.”

“Over the last fifteen years, the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women has evolved at both a conceptual and a practical level. At the conceptual level, the mandate has evolved to capture a wider spectrum of acts as they manifest from the home to the transnational arena, i.e. ranging from domestic violence or global trafficking to the impact of globalisation on women. At the practical level, the mandate involves regional networking, implementation of international laws, technical assistance and monitoring of international laws. The current approach emphasises the universality of violence against women, the multiplicity of its forms, the intersectionality of diverse kinds of discrimination against women, and its linkage to other systems of domination based on inequality and subordination.”

“It is with this approach that I intend to further strengthen the mandate by addressing a number of thematic concerns which in my view require timely and focused attention. These include the issues of reparations to women for wrongs committed in contexts of peace, conflict, post-conflict and transitional justice settings; prevention strategies including those which promote women’s empowerment and engagement in challenging patriarchal interpretations of norms, values and

rights; and multiple, intersecting and aggravated forms of discrimination affecting women and leading to increased levels of violence and limitation or denial of their human rights.”

“The work and the challenges ahead require increased joint efforts with other international human rights mechanisms. In this regard, I am committed to strengthen synergies with the system of special procedures, the treaty bodies - and CEDAW in particular -, the Universal Period Review of the Human Rights Council, as well as with other entities as the Commission on the Status of Women and the new UN gender equality structure. I am also committed to promoting and strengthening the engagement of the mandate with regional mechanisms and civil society actors. The upcoming Beijing +15 and the review of the implementation of the Platform for Action; the 30th anniversary celebrations and reflections on the achievements of the CEDAW; and the recent Security Council Resolution 1888 strengthening the response to the issue of sexual violence in conflict situations, all provide us with the opportunity to intensify our efforts towards protection, prosecution, prevention and provision of effective redress to women who have been subjected to violence.”

“The Secretary-General’s campaign titled 'UNiTE to end violence against women' identifies five key outcomes in its Framework of Action. These include: the adoption and enforcement of national laws; the adoption and implementation of multi-sectoral national plans of action that emphasise prevention and are adequately resourced ; the establishment of data collection and analysis systems on the prevalence of various forms of violence against women and girls ; the establishment of national and/or local campaigns and the engagement of civil society in preventing violence and in supporting women and girls who have been abused ; and the adoption of systematic efforts to address sexual violence in conflict situations and to protect women and girls from rape as a tactic of war, and the full implementation of related laws and policies.”

“The above outcomes and also the due diligence standard provide us with an opportunity to address impunity and to demand accountability. Holding both state and non-state actors accountable for acts of violence against women is an imperative that cannot be ignored. The advocacy campaigns over the next 16 days once again challenge us to focus on ways, measures and means to eliminate all forms of violence against women. It is only by placing women’s human rights, including the right to be free from violence, at the center of such efforts that we will be able to build a more secure world, based on the common goal and the shared obligation of ensuring that human rights are universally and equally enjoyed.”

Ms. Rashida Manjoo (South Africa) was appointed Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences by the United Nations Human Rights Council for an initial period of three years at its 11th session in June 2009. As Special Rapporteur, she is independent from any government or organization and serves in her individual capacity.

For additional information on the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, please visit the website: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/women/rapporteur/index.htm>

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