



# Words to Action:

## Newsletter on violence against women

October 2009  
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### News & Highlights

**General Assembly adopts resolution supporting the establishment of a new gender equality entity** - On 14 September 2009, the General Assembly adopted resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence. In the resolution, the General Assembly expressed strong support for the consolidation of all four women-specific entities (the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)) into a stronger composite entity to be led by an Under-Secretary-General.

**Security Council adopts resolution on sexual violence in armed conflict, calling for the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary General** - On 30 September 2009, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1888, which demands that all parties to armed conflict take immediate action to protect civilians, including women and children, from all forms of sexual violence, and urges greater measures by States and United Nations entities to combat this scourge. The resolution requests the UN Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative to provide coherent and strategic leadership to address sexual violence in armed conflict, and calls upon the Secretary-General to identify and take appropriate measures to rapidly deploy a team of experts to situations of particular concern with respect to sexual violence in armed conflict.  
[www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32370&Cr=sexual+violence&Cr1=](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32370&Cr=sexual+violence&Cr1=)

**Security Council resolution addresses sexual violence against children in armed conflict** - Security Council resolution 1882 of 4 August 2009 requested the Secretary-General to include in the annexes to his reports on children and armed conflict those parties to armed conflict that commit rape and other sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, noted that "[t]his is a major step forward in the fight against impunity for crimes against children and a recognition of the reality of conflict today,

where girls and boys are increasingly targeted and victimized, killed and raped as well as recruited into armed groups."

**Colloquium on conflict-related sexual violence in peace negotiations: implementing Security Council resolution 1820, held in New York, 22-24 June 2009** - This high level colloquium, organized by UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, in partnership with the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, brought together mediators, experts and women's rights advocates to generate technical guidance for mediation teams in addressing sexual violence in peace negotiations. The colloquium produced preliminary recommendations on: (1) pre-ceasefire agreements; (2) ceasefires and ceasefire monitoring; (3) Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) arrangements; (4) justice; and (5) reparations and economic development/recovery.  
[www.unifem.org/news\\_events/event\\_detail.php?EventID=251](http://www.unifem.org/news_events/event_detail.php?EventID=251)

**International Conference on Violence against Women convened under the auspices of the G8 in Rome, Italy, 9-10 September 2009** - The International Conference on Violence Against Women, an Italian G8 Presidency initiative, was attended by Ministers and high-level UN officials, including the Deputy Secretary-General, Asha-Rose Migiro. In her keynote address, the Deputy Secretary-General highlighted the Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women Campaign. She urged the leaders of the G8 to join this effort and to lead by example - by reviewing the laws, policies and practices in their own countries - as well as to promote the five key outcomes of the Secretary-General's Campaign through the G8 platform.

The Presidency Conclusions for the Conference state "that the time has come for a new era of international cooperation and a great alliance by all governments and the civil society to tackle the common challenge of ending all forms of violence against women."

About the conference:

[www.g8italia2009.it/G8/Home/News/G8-G8\\_Layout\\_locale-1199882116809\\_1199901184279.htm](http://www.g8italia2009.it/G8/Home/News/G8-G8_Layout_locale-1199882116809_1199901184279.htm)



Deputy Secretary-General's statement:

[www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/dsgsm468.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/dsgsm468.doc.htm)

Presidency's Conclusions:

[www.pariopportunita.gov.it/images/stories/documenti\\_vari/UsErFiles/Ministro/g8\\_conclusioni\\_carfagna\\_en.pdf](http://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/images/stories/documenti_vari/UsErFiles/Ministro/g8_conclusioni_carfagna_en.pdf)

**UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women is featured as a Commitment to Action by the Clinton Global Initiative** - The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women was featured as a Commitment to Action of the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) in September. The Trust Fund has set an annual target of \$100 million by 2015 in order to meet the increasing demands for funding. When the Commitment to Action was presented, during the CGI Annual Meeting, UNIFEM Deputy Executive Director, Joanne Sandler, stated, "We hope that business, philanthropic and government leaders from all sectors join us to make the goal of US\$100 million a reality."

CGI story:

[www.unifem.org/news\\_events/story\\_detail.php?StoryID=933](http://www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=933)

Trust Fund webpage:

[www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/violence\\_against\\_women/trust\\_fund.php](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/violence_against_women/trust_fund.php)

**New Initiative to address sexual violence against girls launched at Clinton Global Initiative Annual Meeting in New York, 25 September 2009** - The initiative brings together five UN agencies – the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization (WHO) – with the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and private sector supporters via the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI). The initiative partners are working together to: provide funding to CDC and UNICEF to expand surveillance of sexual violence against girls in developing and emerging countries; develop a technical package of interventions for implementation at country level to reduce the incidence of sexual violence against girls, based on data obtained and proven intervention strategies; and prepare and launch a major media campaign to elevate awareness of the problem and motivate social and behavioral change.

[www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32252&Cr=violence+against+women&Cr1=](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32252&Cr=violence+against+women&Cr1=)

[www.unifem.org/news\\_events/story\\_detail.php?StoryID=934](http://www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=934)

**Technical consultation on the medicalization of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) held in Nairobi, Kenya, 20-22 July 2009** - The consultation, organized by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, brought together representatives from

six countries (Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Nigeria, Guinea, and Yemen), UN entities, and non-governmental organizations to develop a global strategy for galvanizing the support of medical professionals and paramedical personnel at the highest policy level towards the abandonment of FGM/C.

[www.unfpa.org/public/site/global/lang/en/pid/2942](http://www.unfpa.org/public/site/global/lang/en/pid/2942)

**Expert meeting on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) held in Geneva, Switzerland, 2-3 July 2009** - The meeting, organized by the Swiss Committee for UNICEF, brought together experts from governments, UN entities and non-governmental organizations to discuss strategies and good practices for the abandonment of FGM/C in countries of prevalence and immigrant communities.

[www.unicef.ch/fr/information/communiqués\\_presse/index.cfm?uNewsID=355](http://www.unicef.ch/fr/information/communiqués_presse/index.cfm?uNewsID=355)

**Fifth annual meeting of women's speakers of parliament focuses on violence against women, held in Vienna, Austria, 13-14 July 2009** - The women speakers of parliament dedicated the first day of their annual meeting, organized by the National Council of Austria and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, to a discussion of strategies to address violence against women, including national laws, national action plans, and prevention initiatives. At the meeting, 15 speakers and deputy speakers of parliament, as well as the Arab Transitional Parliament, signed on to UNIFEM's *Say NO to Violence against Women* campaign.

[www.ipu.org/splz-e/mws09.htm](http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/mws09.htm)

**Update from the Secretary-General's Campaign "UNiTE to End Violence against Women"** - The High-Level Steering Committee of the Secretary-General's Campaign was expanded, and now includes representatives of the following entities of the UN system: OSAGI, DPKO, DPI, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIFEM and WHO.

**Panel discussion held at UNHQ, New York, with Nicholas Kristof & Sheryl WuDunn, authors of "Half the Sky - Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide"** - The panel discussion was opened by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and included Pulitzer prize winning authors Nicholas Kristof & Sheryl WuDunn, and the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Antonio Maria Costa. During his opening statement, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated, "[v]iolence against women stands against everything in the United Nations Charter. Whichever form it takes, it is an abomination. Human trafficking, sex slavery, domestic violence, institutionalized discrimination – all of this must end."

[www.un.org/womenwatch/calendar/09-09.html#halftthesky](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/calendar/09-09.html#halftthesky)



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### Feature Item:

*"In no other area is our collective failure to ensure effective protection for civilians more apparent — and by its very nature more shameful — than in terms of the masses of women and girls, but also boys and men, whose lives are destroyed each year by sexual violence perpetrated in conflict."*

*United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, 2007 (S/2007/643)*

Widespread and systematic sexual violence in conflict settings – including rape, forced prostitution, sexual slavery, forced impregnation, enforced sterilization and indecent assault – has been referred to as the “monstrosity of our century” (Dr. Denis Mukwege, Panzi Hospital, Democratic Republic of the Congo). Often commanded or condoned at the highest levels, sexual violence has been used during conflict, particularly against women and girls, to dominate, terrorize, humiliate, punish, disperse and/or forcibly relocate communities. The perpetrators of sexual violence in recent and ongoing conflicts include members of State armed forces and the police, along with militias and other non-State armed groups. When sexual violence is committed by parties to an armed conflict, there is often a corresponding increase in the incidence of rape and other forms of sexual violence among civilians. Sadly, it typically continues, and may even increase, after the guns fall silent. Sexual violence of this nature and scale not only threatens the security of women and girls, but also erodes the social and economic stability of communities and, in many cases, nations as a whole. It impedes post-conflict recovery efforts and peace processes, not only because it precludes women’s full participation, but also because it is used to circumvent ceasefire agreements.

For much of history these heinous acts have continued with impunity. Rather than receiving justice, women and girls subjected to sexual violence have often been stigmatized by their communities. Wives are rejected by husbands; girls are rendered “unmarriageable”; and survivors risk being accused and punished for adultery, “illegal pregnancy”, or tainting family “honor”.

In recent years, the climate of impunity and the historical silence that has surrounded sexual violence in armed conflict has finally begun to be eliminated. The ad hoc international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda provided the first international jurisprudence recognizing sexual violence, including rape, as acts of torture, crimes against humanity and an element of genocide in some circumstances. In 1998, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) made history, concluding that rape constitutes a war crime and finding that “sexual violence is not limited to physical invasion of the human body and may include acts which do not involve penetration or even physical contact”.<sup>1</sup> In 2000, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) included gender-based war crimes in its indictments and recognized rape as a form of torture.<sup>2</sup> The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which was adopted in 1998 and entered into force in 2000, established jurisdiction to try crimes of sexual violence, such as rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution and forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization and other sexual violence as crimes against humanity when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed at a civilian population. In 2008, the Special Court for Sierra Leone recognized forced marriage as a crime against humanity under international criminal law for the first time in history.<sup>3</sup>

#### Estimates of sexual violence during conflict

- **250,000–500,000** women and girls were raped during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda<sup>4</sup>.
- **20,000–50,000** women and girls were raped during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the early 1990s<sup>5</sup>.
- **50,000–64,000** internally displaced women in Sierra Leone were sexually attacked by combatants<sup>6</sup>.
- An average of **40** women and girls are raped every day in South Kivu, DRC.<sup>7</sup> It is estimated that **more than 200,000** women and children have been raped over more than a decade of the country’s conflict.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Prosecutor v Akayesu*, Case No. ICTR-96-4-T, Judgment (Sept. 2, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> *Prosecutor v Furundzija* Case No. IT-95-17/1-A.

<sup>3</sup> *Prosecutor vs. Alex Tamba Brima, Ibrahim Bazy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu (The AFRC-case)*.

<sup>4</sup> UN Special Rapporteur to the Commission on Human Rights, ‘Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Rwanda’ (E/CN.4/1996/68) para 16.

<sup>5</sup> Ward, Jeanne on behalf of the RHRC, ‘Bosnia and Herzegovina’, *If not Now, When?: Addressing Gender-based Violence in Refugee, Internally Displaced, and Post-Conflict Settings*, 2002, p.81.

<sup>6</sup> Physicians for Human Rights, ‘Executive Summary’ *War-Related Sexual Violence in Sierra Leone: A Population-based Assessment* (2002) 3.



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In 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The resolution calls for special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence in armed conflict and acknowledges their critical role in the peace process. In June 2008, the work of the Security Council on this issue further intensified with the adoption of resolution 1820 which recognizes sexual violence as a tactic of war and an impediment to peace. It demands the “immediate and complete cessation by all parties to armed conflict of all acts of sexual violence against civilians”, and counters the prevailing culture of impunity by noting that “rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide”. In September 2009, the Security Council adopted resolution 1888, reiterating its demand for the immediate and complete cessation of acts of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict and calling on the UN Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative to provide coherent and strategic leadership to address sexual violence in armed conflict, as well as to identify and take appropriate measures to rapidly deploy a team of experts to situations of particular concern.

### UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict

In March 2007, the inter-agency initiative UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action) was launched. UN Action unites the work of 12 UN entities<sup>9</sup> in a concerted effort to improve coordination and accountability, amplify advocacy, and support country-level efforts to prevent sexual violence and respond more effectively to the needs of survivors. In June 2007, the Secretary-General’s Policy Committee endorsed UN Action as “a critical UN system-wide initiative to guide advocacy, programming, knowledge building and resource mobilization” to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict.

Since its inception, UN Action has worked to build understanding of sexual violence as a security issue that requires a security response. In May 2008 a conference entitled “Women Targeted or Affected by Armed Conflict: What Role for Military Peacekeepers?” was organized under the auspices of UN Action. During the forum, military commanders, policy-makers and police discussed how political and tactical responses to violence against women in conflict settings could be strengthened. As one seasoned peacekeeper put it, it has “become more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in modern conflicts”.

UN Action’s global campaign, *Get Angry, Get Involved, GET CROSS!* calls upon the general public to show solidarity with survivors of sexual violence by uploading their crossed-arm image to [www.stoprapenow.org](http://www.stoprapenow.org). These photos will create a global photo-montage evidencing outrage against sexual violence in conflict, in order to mobilize public support and political will for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1820. The campaign invites activists and policy-makers to ask what their country is doing to enhance security for women affected by war, including:



- Contributing troops or police – including women – to peacekeeping missions;
- Resource-mobilization to fund services for survivors;
- Oversight and training of the security sector in sexual violence prevention/response;
- Supporting legal measures to end impunity; and/or
- Sponsoring women’s full and equal participation in peace talks?

The campaign contributes to the Secretary-General’s Campaign, *UNiTE to End Violence Against Women, 2008-2015*.

**UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, June, 2009**

This feature was prepared by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW) in collaboration with the UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action).

<sup>7</sup> Rodriguez, Claudia, ‘Sexual Violence in South Kivu’, *Forced Migration Review*, 2007 (27), p.45.

<sup>8</sup> Statement of Hilde F. Johnson, Co-Chair of UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, 5 March 2009.

<sup>9</sup> DPA, DPKO, OCHA, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WFP and WHO.



## Database Update

As of September 2009, 81 responses to the questionnaire on violence against women had been received from Member States and entered into the Secretary-General's database on violence against women. The secretariat has continued to receive useful updates from Member States, including information from Suriname in relation to its' new Law on Domestic Violence (enacted 2 June 2009) and revised Moral Law, which criminalizes marital rape (enacted 14 July 2009), and has uploaded to the database the full text of numerous laws and policies, including national action plans provided by Haiti, the Philippines, and the United Republic of Tanzania. Between Friday 13 March 2009, and Wednesday 30 September 2009, there were 18,235 visitors to the database website from over 180 Member States.

## Feature Resources

### ***Handbook for legislation on violence against women, Division for the Advancement of Women, 2009***

This Handbook, developed by the Division for the Advancement of Women and based on an expert group meeting convened in May 2008, intends to provide all stakeholders with detailed guidance to support the adoption and effective implementation of comprehensive legislation which prevents violence against women, punishes perpetrators, and ensures the rights of survivors everywhere. The Handbook outlines the international and regional legal and policy frameworks which mandate States to enact and implement comprehensive and effective laws to address violence against women. It then presents a model framework for legislation on violence against women which contains recommendations on the content of legislation, accompanied by explanatory commentaries and good practice examples. While many of the framework's recommendations are applicable to all forms of violence against women, some are specific to certain forms, such as domestic or sexual violence. The Handbook also provides users with a checklist of considerations to be kept in mind when drafting legislation on violence against women.

An advance version of the *Handbook* is available on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish. The Handbook is accompanied by a series of videos introducing the model framework and its key provisions. [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/v-handbook.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/v-handbook.htm)

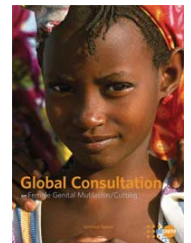
### **Other resources**

▪ *A Parliamentary Response to Violence against Women: Conference of Chairpersons and Members of Parliamentary Bodies Dealing with Gender Equality*, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2009. This publication highlights the role of parliamentarians in responding to violence against women, including through enacting legislation, assessing the cost of violence against women, utilizing gender-sensitive budgets, and following-up on and scrutinizing government action. The publication is based on the Conference of Chairpersons and Members of Parliamentary Bodies Dealing with Gender Equality which took place in Geneva, Switzerland from 2 to 4 December 2008.

The publication is available in English: [www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/vaw\\_en.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/vaw_en.pdf); and French: [http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/vaw\\_fr.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/vaw_fr.pdf)

▪ *Global Consultation on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Technical Report*, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2009. This report contains the findings of research on global trends and the prevalence of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), as well as its linkages with maternal and newborn health. It describes changing patterns and practices, including medicalization, and analyzes the threat FGM/C poses to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as its economic and health costs. It analyses gaps and challenges, and identifies lessons learned and strategies for accelerating the abandonment process. The publication is based on the outcomes of the Global Consultation on FGM/C which took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in July 2007.

[www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2008/fgm\\_2008.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2008/fgm_2008.pdf)



▪ *Anti-Human Trafficking Manual for Criminal Justice Practitioners*, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), August 2009. This manual aims to address capacity gaps of criminal justice practitioners working to prevent and combat trafficking

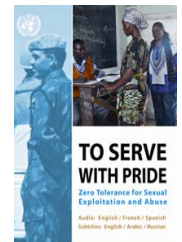


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in persons, protect and assist its victims, and effectively cooperate with others in doing so. It contains 14 stand-alone modules which elaborate promising practices in each phase of the criminal justice response to trafficking in persons, from identification of victims through investigations and prosecutions of traffickers to the protection of victims. [www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/09-80667\\_Introduction\\_Ebook.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/09-80667_Introduction_Ebook.pdf)

▪ *“To Serve with Pride: Zero Tolerance for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse”*, The UN and NGO Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of the Executive Committees on Humanitarian Affairs and on Peace and Security (ECHA/ECPS). This DVD is designed to raise awareness among UN and related personnel on how acts of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) impact individuals and whole communities. It highlights the Secretary-General’s Bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse ([ST/SGB/2003/13](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/06-13.html)). Initially produced in English in 2006, the DVD is now available in French and Spanish with sub-titles in Arabic, Russian and English in August 2009.

<http://ochaonline.un.org/HumanitarianIssues/ProtectionfromSexualExploitationandAbuse/SEADocumentLibrary/tabid/4593/Default.aspx>



### Upcoming Events

**October 2009:** Starting October 2009, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) will host an exhibition in various cities commemorating the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and highlighting gender-based violence issues. The first exhibit will take place at UNHQ, New York.

**12-14 October 2009:** The Third Committee of the General Assembly will consider two reports of the Secretary-General on violence against women under it’s agenda item on the advancement of women:

- (1) Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women – Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/151); and
- (2) Violence against women migrant workers – Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/152).

**24 November 2009:** The tenth anniversary of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November 2009) will be celebrated by several events at UNHQ.

**25 November 2009:** The annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign will commence. This year’s theme is “Commit • Act • Demand: We CAN End Violence Against Women!”.

**1-3 December 2009:** The Third meeting of the Council of Europe’s ad hoc committee on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CAHVIO) will take place in Strasbourg, France. [www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/violence/meetings\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/violence/meetings_en.asp)

**2-4 and 7-9 December 2009:** The Division for the Advancement of Women, in cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), will hold two sub-regional multi-stakeholder workshops on legislative frameworks to address violence against women in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

### About Words to Action

*Words to Action* is a newsletter produced by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women. It disseminates information on actions undertaken by Member States and UN entities to address violence against women. The Division for the Advancement of Women in Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat supports the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly of the United Nations on gender equality and the empowerment of women. For more information, see [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/)

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