

Remarks of Hope Lewis (moderator),
Professor of Law & Chair, Global Law Committee,
Northeastern University School of Law

“Preventing and Ending Violence against Women with Disabilities”
United Nations Headquarters - Conference Room 3 - North Lawn Building
23 October 2012, 1:15 – 2:30 p.m.

Program

Welcoming Remarks

- Ms. Shamshad Akhtar, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Opening Remarks

- Ms. Akiko Ito (moderator), Chief of the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and UN/Focal Point on Disability.
- Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, UN Women
- H.E. Mr. Garen Nazarian, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations
- H.E. Mr. Eduardo Jose Atienza De Vega, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations

Expert Panelists

- Ms. Hope Lewis (moderator), Professor of Law & Chair, Global Law Committee, Northeastern University School of Law.
- Ms. Rashida Manjoo, United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences
- Ms. Stephanie Ortoleva, Esq., Founder and President of Women Enabled, Inc., International Human Rights Lawyer and Consultant
- Ms. Karine Grigoryan, Representative from Agate Center For Women With Special Needs in Armenia
- Ms. Lois A. Herman, Women’s UN Report Network (WUNRN)
- Ms. Salwa Kader, U.S. Federation for Middle East Peace

Welcome

Distinguished Representatives and Experts, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good Afternoon. Let me add my welcome to each of you who made time to be here this afternoon to discuss the crucial, but sometimes overlooked, issue of violence against women and girls with disabilities throughout the world.

This event was made possible by the co-sponsors and organizers, including:

- the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations;
- the Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations;
- Ms. Akiko Ito, Chief of the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and UN/Focal Point on Disability;
- the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DSPD/DESA);
- Ms. Carol Pollack, Social Affairs Officer;
- UN Women;
- Women Enabled, Inc. and Ms. Stephanie Ortoleva;
- Women's UN Report Network; the U.S. Federation for Middle East Peace;
- the National Organization for Women Foundation (NOW Foundation);
- and Northeastern University School of Law.
- My personal thanks as well to Ms. Natalie Knott, Post-graduate Fellow in Disability and Elder Law, New York Legal Assistance Group.

Background

A recent World Bank and World Health Organization report tells us that there are now 1 billion persons with disabilities. If even half of those are women and girls, the topic we discuss today affects 500 million persons.

Neither disability nor violence against women respects economic class, nationality, religion or belief, race, or culture. Nevertheless, the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, scholars and activists have noted that multiple forms of discrimination may compound and intensify the discrimination and violence accompanying any single status.

Identity intersections and the interdependence of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights mean that international and state protections for women must be effectively and contextually implemented.

That is why the strategies and recommendations from our distinguished panel of experts are so important. They help us further and deepen cross-cultural dialogue on these issues from a variety of perspectives and experiences.

In the brief time we have today, I hope that our panelists will share their expertise on three key questions:

- 1) Which strategies are successful (or most promising) in preventing and ending violence against women and girls with disabilities, and why?

2) What next steps and recommendations should states, international organizations, and civil society prioritize in ending violence against women and girls with disabilities? and

3) What are some best practices for ensuring the full participation and inclusion of women and girls with disabilities from all class, racial, ethnic, religious, indigenous, and cultural groups at the planning and implementation levels?

Panelist Introductions:

I will introduce our panelists very briefly given the time constraints, but I urge you to get a better sense of their numerous accomplishments and work by reviewing the biographies and the web links to their organizations provided in the handouts.

Our first distinguished speaker is

- [Ms. Rashida Manjoo](#), United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences. The Special Rapporteur will present a report to the United Nations General Assembly tomorrow that focuses on the prevention of violence against women with disabilities. It is cited and linked on your handout. Among her many other accomplishments, Ms. Manjoo is on the faculty of law at the University of Cape Town (South Africa) and is a former member of that country's Commission on Gender Equality. She has agreed to start us off with an overview.
- [Ms. Karine Grigoryan](#) is Founder of Agate Center for Women with Special Needs in Armenia. She is a tireless advocate for positive change, an end to social stigmas, and human rights for Armenian women and girls with all forms of disabilities. She also works in coalition with several regional and international disability organizations.
- [Ms. Stephanie Ortoleva](#), Esq., Founder and President of Women Enabled, Inc., is an International Human Rights Lawyer and Consultant. She could not be physically-present this afternoon, but was the lead organizer behind this event and other efforts to build awareness and action to end violence against women with disabilities. She has provided a written version of her presentation; we all wish her well for a speedy recovery. Ms. Ortoleva, a team of lawyers and law students, and I recently released an on-line report, titled, "Forgotten Sisters—A Report on Violence against Women—its Nature, Causes, and Consequences" (August 2012), available for download on-line through the Social Science Research Network: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2133332 or through the Women Enabled website: <https://sites.google.com/site/womenenabled/violence-against-women>

- Ms. Salwa Kader is Co-Founder and President of the U.S. Federation for Middle East Peace. She is a longtime advocate for peace who has been recognized internationally with numerous awards for her conflict resolution initiatives and courageous work on the protection and empowerment of women.
- Ms. Lois A. Herman is Founder-Coordinator of the WUNRN - Women's UN Report Network. WUNRN, based on a UN Study, addresses the human rights, oppression, and empowerment of women and girls all over the world. WUNRN is one of the largest global gender research and information programs. Ms. Herman has worked to include information about, and perspectives of, women with disabilities in WUNRN's global network.

[Panelists' written remarks are provided on the UN Enable website.]

Concluding Remarks

Many thanks to our distinguished panelists for taking time to share their work and expertise on the importance of addressing this issue and on what has already been done at UN, regional, country, and civil society levels. Thanks to you for your patience with our time constraints; I urge you to follow-up by contacting any of the participant organizations and by reviewing the resources listed on the handout. We are advised that the panelists' remarks and the supplementary handouts will be available on the UN Enable site at

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=46&pid=1602>

It was a pleasure and an honor to be with you.