

**Briefing/ panel discussion on the Secretary General's studies on  
Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children  
New York, 14 October 2005**

**Opening statement by Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Assistant Secretary-General and  
Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women**

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all participants in today's panel discussion and briefing on two studies that are currently being conducted for the Secretary General, namely the study on violence against women, and the study on violence against children.

I am delighted to share the podium with Professor Paulo Sergio Pinheiro as co-chair of this panel. Professor Pinheiro was appointed by the Secretary General in 2003 as Independent Expert to prepare an in depth study on violence against children. Among his broad and long-standing commitment to the cause of human rights, he is a member of the Sub-Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and also holds the position of Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar. He is currently a visiting professor at Brown University and a research associate at the Center for the Study of Violence which he founded in 1987.

I express my appreciation to the Division for the Advancement of Women who is responsible for preparing the study on violence against women, and the Secretariat of the study on violence against children for jointly organizing this panel discussion.

Today's event is part of our continuing effort to exchange information and collaborate with our colleagues on issues of common concern in regard to both studies. I have had the pleasure to meet Professor Pinheiro at previous occasions, and I am very happy that we are briefing you – the participants – together on the two studies. We have also been very pleased with the participation of members of the Secretariat of your study, Prof. Pinheiro, in previous preparatory activities of the DAW, in particular the two expert group meetings, on data and statistics and on good practices in combating such violence. We look forward to continuing this exchange and collaboration.

We are pursuing several objectives with today's panel discussion. First, it gives us an opportunity to provide information and updates on the preparations, including challenges, of the two studies, and to elaborate on their context, objectives, overall approach, and process. It also gives us an opportunity to emphasize the links between the two studies and to focus on issues of relevance for both studies. The four speakers we have invited will highlight issues that we are addressing in the studies, and provide us with an opportunity to discuss common challenges and ways for addressing them.

Let me say a few words about the format of today's event. I will first present an update on the study on violence against women, and then invite Professor Pinheiro to give an introduction to the study on violence against children. After that, Professor Pinheiro and I will introduce the four speakers who will make presentations. We are all committed to keeping our remarks to **not more than 7 minutes**. The presentations will be followed by an opportunity for questions and comments from the floor. We hope that there will be enough time at the end for panelists to make brief summing up comments or answer questions addressed to them.

With your indulgence, Prof. Pinheiro, I will start with a brief introduction to the SG's study on violence against women.

The Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women was mandated by General Assembly Resolution 58/185, of December 2003. We submitted an interim report to the General Assembly, which discussed and provided feedback during consideration of the items on the advancement of women earlier this week. A draft resolution on the study is under discussion.

Since I do not want to exceed my time limit, I will highlight only the goals, context, and preparatory process for the study on violence against women.

First, the goals of the study are to:

- (a) Highlight the persistence and unacceptability of all forms of violence against women in all parts of the world;
- (b) Identify ways and means for better and more sustained and effective implementation of Government commitments and obligations to combat all forms of violence against women, and increasing accountability;
- (c) Strengthen political commitment and joint efforts of all stakeholders to prevent and eliminate violence against women.

The study will include strategic action-oriented recommendations, for consideration by States, at the sixty-first session of the Assembly.

Second, the context of the study:

Here, I wish to highlight that the study must be seen within the context of the General Assembly: The study, including the recommendations it will be putting forward, will support the General Assembly in its ongoing efforts to address violence against women. It is expected that the study will contribute to strengthening consensus at the intergovernmental level on the types of actions needed to combat all forms and manifestations of violence against women.

The study must also be seen within the overall context of work on violence against women. Here, we have seen growing, and progressively more comprehensive attention to the question of violence against women as a form of discrimination against women and thus a violation of the human rights of women. Such work has been undertaken by States, entities of the United Nations system, NGOs/civil society, researchers and individual women. They have documented violence against women, raised awareness, and developed responses, including those that aim at prosecution and punishment of perpetrators and provision of support to victims. They have also taken measures towards prevention.

These efforts have resulted in legal, policy and programmatic measures and action by many stakeholders, at different levels. They have also resulted in greater and growing understanding and recognition of the inter-sectionality of violence against women and other threats and violations of women's human rights. At the same time, the gaps and challenges in preventing and combating violence against women, as well as lack of implementation of existing commitments have become more visible, and action has become more pressing and urgent.

Let me turn to my third point, namely the preparatory process

The process for conducting the study is as important as the study itself. It is a unique opportunity for highlighting the continuing challenges in combating all forms and manifestations of violence against women. The study is a vehicle for galvanizing attention to the issue, enhancing political commitment at the highest levels, and accelerating momentum and strengthening concerted action at the national and international levels. The study and its preparatory process should result in increased accountability of all actors for action against violence against women.

We have taken steps and put in place measures to ensure the input and feedback from all interested stakeholders. Member States, non-governmental organizations and others, such as special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights and the human rights treaty bodies, have been invited to submit inputs. Entities of the United Nations system play an especially important role both in ensuring that their knowledge and experience is channeled into the process, but also to use the preparations to strengthen their activities on violence against women. We are very pleased that the regional commissions are playing a very active role in this effort.

Our task force meets regularly to exchange information and provide feedback, and our Advisory Committee consisting of 10 internationally recognized experts on the issue provides advice and guidance.

We have convened expert group meetings, held consultations and briefings at Headquarters and in conjunction with events in different locations to increase attention and action. We will continue to provide opportunities for member states and other stakeholders to discuss key issues and recommendations that should be included in the study.

Two of the challenging issues to be tackled in the study will be highlighted by our speakers, namely the question of data on violence against women, and state responsibility.

Before concluding I would like to express my appreciation to the Governments of Austria, France, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands for the generous financial contributions in support of the preparation of the study.

I will stop here, and turn the floor over to Professor Pinheiro for his overview remarks.