

Commission on Population and Development
Fortieth session
10 April 2007

**The Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of
violence against women, and follow-up**

Statement by
Christine Brautigam
Chief, Women's Rights Section
Division for the Advancement of Women/DESA

Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak during the general debate on national experience in population matters, which this year covers the changing age structures of populations and their implications for development. I have been asked to focus on the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122/Add 1 and Corr.1). The General Assembly had requested preparation of such a study in December 2003. The study was presented to the Assembly in October 2006, and resulted in the adoption of a comprehensive resolution on "Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women" (A/RES/61/143, of 19 December 2006).

Male violence against women and girls is a truly global phenomenon - occurring in many different settings and cutting across all cultures, regions and countries. It takes on many different manifestations, and evolves and emerges in new forms. Such violence is perpetrated by family members, by strangers, and by the State or its agents. It occurs in both the public and private spheres, and in peacetime as well as in conflict and its aftermath.

Male violence against women is not confined to any particular group of women - on the contrary, women of all ages, classes, and income groups are subjected to violence by men. The way in which violence is experienced by women and girls around the world may, however, be significantly influenced by age, class, disability, ethnicity, religion and economic status. States have a responsibility to protect women from violence, to hold perpetrators accountable, and to provide justice and remedies to victims.

Although global statistics are inadequate, the Secretary-General's in-depth study indicates that, on average, at least one in three women is subject to some form of violence at some time in her life. These numbers make clear the pervasiveness of this violation of women's human rights and the inadequacy of the responses in all parts of the world.

Violence against women has far-reaching consequences – it endangers the lives of women and girls, and harms families and communities. It undercuts the potential of women to contribute to peace and development, and constrains the achievement of all the internationally agreed development goals, including the objectives on gender equality and the advancement of women set at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the Millennium Development Goals on poverty, education, child health, maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, and overall sustainable development.

The in-depth study was undertaken by the Division for the Advancement of Women in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and involved an extensive process of consultations and inputs by Member States, non-governmental organizations, UN entities, experts, and other stakeholders. It synthesizes existing research, knowledge, and experience at the national, regional, and global levels.

The study highlights the persistence, and unacceptability, of all forms of violence against women, in all parts of the world. It seeks to strengthen the political commitment and enhance joint efforts of all stakeholders to prevent and eliminate such violence. It aims to identify ways to ensure more sustained and effective implementation of State obligations to address all forms of violence against women, and to strengthen accountability.

The study reiterates that violence against women is both a cause and a consequence of discrimination against women and a human rights violation. Efforts to prevent and ultimately end violence against women must therefore be systematically grounded in the work of all States and other actors to eliminate discrimination against women and promote women's enjoyment of all their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

After tracing the emergence of violence against women as a public concern including of the international community, the study sets out the context within which violence against women occurs. It presents available knowledge about the extent and prevalence of different forms of violence against women, in the main settings: that is, within the family, the community, and perpetrated or condoned by the State, including in conflict settings. The study reviews the causes and consequences of violence against women, including its costs. It discusses the gaps and challenges in the availability of data, including in methodologies for assessing the prevalence of different forms of violence. It then highlights the particular responsibilities of States to address and prevent violence against women. Finally, the study gives examples of a range of promising practices to address violence against women, especially in the fields of law, service provision, and prevention.

The study underlines that detailed recommendations for action on violence against women have been developed in inter-governmental agreements and in reports, studies, and guidelines by different actors. However, it also concludes that significant gaps remain in their effective implementation. The study therefore aims at accelerating and enhancing action to prevent and respond to violence against women.

The study proposes recommendations for six key areas for action at the national level, aimed at: securing gender equality and protecting women's human rights; exercising leadership to end violence against women; closing the gaps between international standards and national

laws, policies and practices; strengthening the knowledge base on all forms of violence against women to inform policy and strategy development; building and sustaining strong multisectoral strategies, coordinated nationally and locally; and allocating adequate resources and funding. Concrete recommendations are also directed at the international level, and address both the intergovernmental level and the United Nations system. They highlight in particular the role of the General Assembly in ensuring that meaningful follow-up and implementation is undertaken by different stakeholders. Together, these recommendations constitute a clear strategy for Member States and the United Nations system to make measurable progress in preventing and eliminating violence against women.

Chairperson,

Let me briefly review one aspect covered in the study, namely the question of *research and data collection* on different forms of violence against women. In some areas, notable progress has been made in recent years. For example, national surveys on intimate partner violence have been conducted in at least 41 countries, and there are at least 71 countries in which at least one survey has been conducted on the subject. These are complemented by research studies on specific issues or aspects that provide evidence on the scope of particular forms of violence, as well as its consequences and costs, for women, their families, communities, and countries.

The study discusses the use of population-based surveys – either dedicated surveys or the use of specific questions or modules within large-scale surveys designed to generate information on broader issues such as crime, or reproductive health. It also discusses other sources of data and information, including service-based data and qualitative research.

At the same time, the study notes that despite progress made in recent years, there is still an urgent need to strengthen the knowledge base on all forms of violence against women so as to enhance the effectiveness of policy and programme responses, of resources to address this scourge, and to monitor progress in addressing it. Much of the existing data cannot be compared in a meaningful manner. Very few countries collect data on violence against women on a regular basis which would allow changes over time to be measured, and many forms of violence against women remain un-, or under-documented. Likewise, data is also needed on how violence against women affects different groups of women, which would require data to be disaggregated by factors such as age or ethnicity. Little data is available to assess the impact of measures taken to prevent and address violence against women.

Ensuring adequate data collection is part of every State's obligation to address violence against women. This must include efforts to collect data systematically on the most common forms of violence. There is also a need to strengthen data collection and knowledge on forms that affect relatively few women overall but have a devastating effect on those concerned, or on new or emerging forms of violence. Data is also needed to shed further light on the linkages between violence against women and efforts to achieve other goals, for example to combat the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In response to the study, the General Assembly adopted a comprehensive resolution to intensify efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women in December 2006, addressing

recommendations for action to different stakeholders. Among other measures, the Assembly called on States to eliminate violence against women by means of a more systematic, comprehensive, multisectoral and sustained approach, adequately supported and facilitated by strong institutional mechanisms and financing. Such efforts should include a range of legislative and policy initiatives, awareness raising and capacity building measures, and data collection. Entities of the United Nations system are called upon to support Member States at the national level to combat such violence, for example through the development and implementation of national action plans. States are also invited to increase significantly their voluntary financial support for activities related to preventing and eliminating all forms of violence against women, the empowerment of women and gender equality carried out by the entities of the UN system.

Likewise, the resolution provides the entities of the United Nations system with enhanced guidance to coordinate and intensify efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in a more systematic, comprehensive and sustained way. In this regard, particular emphasis is placed on the work of the UN Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and its Task Force on Violence against Women.

Specifically, the resolution invites the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions and other relevant United Nations bodies to discuss, by 2008, within their respective mandates, the question of violence against women in all its forms and manifestations, bearing in mind the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the in-depth study on all forms of violence against women. It invites these bodies to set priorities for addressing this issue in their future efforts and work programmes and to transmit the outcome of those discussions to the Secretary-General for his annual report to the General Assembly. It invites the Statistical Commission to develop and propose, in consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women, and building on the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, a set of possible indicators on violence against women in order to assist States in assessing the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women.

The Secretary-General is requested to establish a coordinated database on the extent, nature and consequences of all forms of violence against women, and on the impact and effectiveness of policies and programmes for combating such violence. Lastly, the Secretary-General is requested to submit an annual report to the Assembly on this question.

Chairperson,

Since adoption of the resolution, a number of concrete follow-up initiatives have already been launched. For example, the Task Force of the IANWGE has prepared its terms of reference, and identified its objectives and results to be achieved within the years 2007 and 2008, including activities to be implemented.

The CSW, which met from 26 February to 9 March, discussed follow up to the SG's study and the GA resolution under its item on emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issue affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men, supported by a panel of experts. It also took into account the study's recommendations in its agreed conclusions

on this year's priority theme which covered the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child.

Other functional commissions may similarly consider ways in which violence against women affects the implementation of their respective mandates. For example, this Commission has central responsibility for follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development. Many of the issues within this broad agenda are linked to the question of violence against women, and such violence will have a direct impact on the achievement of relevant goals and objectives. The Commission therefore has the opportunity to consider these interlinkages in an innovative manner that will further enhance international and national action to prevent, and respond to violence against women.

Thank you for your attention.