

Remarks

By

Ms. Anita Kiki Gbeho

UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative

**Launch of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based
Violence (GBV)**

Khomasdal Constituency, corner of Frankfurt and Istanbul Street

Windhoek, Namibia

Director of Ceremonies

Hon. Doreen Sioka, Minister of Gender Equality and Child Welfare

Hon. Laura Mcleod-Katjirua, Governor of Khomas Region,

Hon. Margaret Mensah-William, Councillor of Khomasdal
Constituency,

Adv. Martha Imalwa, Prosecutor-General,

Lt. Gen. Sebastian Ndeitunga, Inspector-General of Police,

Your Excellencies: Ambassadors and High Commissioners present
here today

Ms. Anna Matebele, Representative of Childline/Lifeline

Senior Government Officials present

Members of the media

Ladies and Gentelman

Allow me to firstly thank the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare for inviting me to speak at this important event. I am pleased to be here.

I read the Secretary General of the United Nations statement as part of the launch of 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence (GBV). I also would like to say a few words about today's commemoration and then

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Violence against women and children remains one of the most widespread human rights violations globally. It is a threat to democracy, peace and security; and lays a heavy burden on national economies world wide.

Even though Namibia has a legal framework in place, we still need to ensure that these frameworks are effective and can protect women and girls from gender based violence.

Numerous studies speak to the importance of addressing men and boys' perceptions and behaviors on gender-based violence in their roles as perpetrators, gatekeepers, supportive partners, and caregivers.

Also engaging men and boys on the challenge that harmful and violent social norms represent is critical to achieving change. They must join us as partners in taking a zero tolerance stand on violence against women and children.

Violence and harmful norms can be prevented through education and public awareness campaigns, engaging adolescents and young people as agents of change, and promoting the empowerment and leadership of women and girls.

Sadly and as evidenced by regular media reports, gender based violence continues to snatch the lives of women in Namibia, in direct contradiction to this years theme: "Peace in the Home to Peace in Namibia, Unite to End Violence Against Women and Children"

According to Police stats GBV in Namibia is on the increase with 822 cases reported this year alone. Approximately 3 500 female victims of grievous bodily harm were recorded for each year between 2009 and 2014. Rape too is prevalent, an average of 631 women and 73 men were raped every year over the last 5 years.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would be remiss if I did not commend the Government's commitment to addressing GBV. In 2014, Cabinet approved a National Gender Coordination Mechanism to strengthen collaborative efforts. Addressing gender based violence cannot be achieved by one entity alone, in this case the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. We need all lead ministries, civil society and private sector on board.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Namibia has launched a war on poverty and created a ministry to coordinate efforts in this regard. The majority of those who are poor are women.

To win this war we need empowered woman and girls.

There are numerous studies that demonstrate that women are great multipliers of development progress. A child who has a mother with some formal education is more likely to survive to their fifth birthday, receive adequate nutrition, and be immunized and enrolled in school.

We therefore cannot talk about ending poverty, and development without talking about eliminating violence against women and children.

So as we commemorate year 24 of 16 days of activism let's once again remind ourselves of our aim: to completely eliminate gender based violence against women and children.

MESSAGE OF THE UN SG INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The atrocious crimes being committed against women and girls in conflict zones, along with the domestic abuse found in all countries, are grave threats to progress.

I am deeply concerned about the plight of women and girls living in conditions of armed conflict, who suffer various forms of violence, sexual assault, sexual slavery and trafficking. Violent extremists are perverting religious teachings to justify the mass subjugation and abuse of women. These are not random acts of violence, or the incidental fallout of war, but rather systematic efforts to deny women's freedoms and control their bodies. As the world strives to counter and prevent violence extremism, the protection and empowerment of women and girls must be a key consideration.

Roughly half of today's 60 million forcibly displaced people are women. Many who flee war and violence are often exploited by unscrupulous smugglers, and frequently suffer gender discrimination and xenophobia in host societies. Those who are too young, too old or too frail to make the risky journey are left behind even more vulnerable without those who have left.

Even in areas at peace, violence against women persists in the form of femicide, sexual assault, female genital mutilation/cutting, early marriage and cyberviolence. These practices traumatize individuals and tear at the fabric of society.

I have led a global response through the UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign and the HeForShe initiative to engage men in promoting gender equality. I call on governments to increase contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, which aims to address chronic underinvestment in this area.

Millions of people across the world are uniting under the banner colour orange, chosen to symbolize the brighter future of a world free from violence against women and girls. This year, in a sign of the growing momentum for change, orange lights will illuminate iconic

landmarks from the historic ruins at Petra in Jordan to Niagara Falls in North America.

We can also blaze a path to a future of dignity and equality for all by implementing the newly adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which recognizes the importance of eliminating violence against women, with related targets across several of the Sustainable Development Goals. Recent major reviews of United Nations peace operations, peacebuilding efforts and the women, peace and security agenda have all highlighted the critical value of women's participation in peace and security.

The pervasiveness of violence against women and girls means we can all take steps to address it. Let us join forces to end this crime, promote full gender equality and realize a world where women and girls enjoy the safety they deserve – for their sake and for all of humanity.