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H.E. President Girma Calls on Women to Stand Up for their Constitutional Rights

ADDIS ABABA, March 13, 2008: The President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, H. E. Girma Woldegiorgis called on Ethiopian women to stand up for their constitutional rights and discharge their important responsibility by organizing themselves.

Speaking at the 2008 International Women's Day celebration hosted by the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) at the Millennium Hall, H.E. President. Girma called on all citizens, governmental and nongovernmental organizations to attach due importance to gender issues.

The President awarded medals to 100 women who have made commendable contributions in their respective fields of expertise including farming, pastoralism, athletics and business among others.

More than 2000 people were in attendance at the launching ceremony and photographic exhibition and cultural performance jointly organized by Ministry of Women's Affairs and Ministry of Information.

Ethiopia's recognition of International Women's Day was celebrated with a four-day long series of activities beginning with the placement of a corner stone at the Bole Medhaniam Square commemorating women and peace.

While addressing one of the related events at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA) on 10th March, UNICEF Representative and UN Team Coordinator, Mr. Bjorn Ljungqvist said on his part that violence against women and children is unacceptable and must be brought to an end especially during this year which is the year of the 60th Anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights.

Mr. Bjorn underscored the need for increased networks and partnerships with other men and women with the same convictions and beliefs and added that public institutions that protect women and children against violence must be strengthened.

In line with keeping the spirit of UN joining hands for progress in the new Millennium, UN agencies actively participated in the four days long celebration. An exhibition of digital stories of the experiences of young women was displayed by UNESCO and a brief documentary film was screened by UNICEF as part of an event supported to examine Gender Based Violence. A campaign event to end early marriage was supported by UNFPA at Meskel Square with over 30 artists painting their impressions of the effects of early marriage on the 100 metre long canvass that attracted and provoked discussion amongst hundreds of on-lookers. The ILO, in partnership with its constituents (employers, workers and government), successfully launched a week-long positive

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multimedia campaign under the theme: "Investing in Decent Work for Women: Not just right, but Smart". The success stories of women engaged in Ethiopia's priority employment sectors were widely highlighted.

A panel discussion supported by contributing UN agencies and other organizations was held at the parliament on 9 March 2008 highlighted the level of participation of women in decision making process and stressed the fact that Ethiopia stands second in political participation of women in Africa.

W/zo Uba Mohammed, State Minister, Ministry of Women's Affairs said on the occasion that while there are appropriate laws and policies that safeguard the rights of pastoralist and agro-pastoralist women in Ethiopia, implementation remains a challenge. She noted that the Pastoralist Development Package recently adopted is a landmark initiative for this special group of women in Ethiopia.

This year's International Women's' Day organized by MOWA in collaboration with partners was colourfully celebrated with active participation of women and other stakeholders from all walks of life.

For more information

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