

MEDIA RELEASE

22 African countries pledge action now to end violence against women and children

Johannesburg, 27 Nov., 2006 – Twenty two African countries today recommitted themselves to ending violence against women and children on the closing day of a colloquium marking the annual observance of the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children, in Benoni, South Africa.

Some 170 participants pledged to take up the challenge issued by UNICEF Country Representative Macharia Kamau “to work together to build partnerships, establish a common vision and take common action” to end violence against women and children in their respective countries.

Continental representatives gathered to deliberate at the ‘Gender Justice in Africa Colloquium’ on how they can improve the sharing of Best Practices on multidisciplinary prevention, response, care and support interventions.

Participants declared their commitment to act collectively and under the leadership of the African Union (AU), to accelerate action and inter-country cooperation to improve gender justice throughout the continent. “When gender justice is ignored, all development is threatened,” the delegates said.

The meeting from 23-27 November was hosted by the Government of South Africa through the Interdepartmental Management Team led by South Africa’s National Prosecuting Authority (SOCA Unit), in partnership with UNICEF and the Government of Denmark.

The programme highlighted the successes of the Thuthuzela Integrated Model of care and support for women and children survivors of sexual violence.

UNICEF Representative, Mr Macharia Kamau, congratulated the Government of South Africa and delegates from other African states, who had gathered in such numbers to discuss, learn and share from each other lessons and insights on gender based violence and what special and practical measures can be put in place to protect children and women.

Kamau said: “If apartheid was not brought down as recently as 12 years ago, we would not be sitting together in the same room. If we could bring about massive democratic changes so successfully, we CAN end violence against children and women.”

National Director of Public Prosecutions, Advocate Vusi Pikoli, further echoed the delegates’ commitment. “We cannot wait. We will not wait to end the scourge of violence against women and children. It is urgent. Together we must Act. Not Tomorrow. But today and now.”

Later today, the participants will affirm their commitment to act collectively and under the leadership of the AU accelerate action as well as inter-country cooperation to improve gender justice throughout the African Continent.

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