



violation of women's human rights and the inadequacy of the responses in all parts of the world.

The UN's in-depth study illustrates very clearly that the violence of men against women and girls is an affront against humanity. It has far-reaching consequences - endangering the lives of women and girls, harming their families and communities, and damaging the very fabric of societies.

The human development consequences of violence against women and girls go far beyond the devastating human costs for women, girls and their families. Persistent violence seriously undermines the potential of women and girls to be involved in and contribute actively to human development, as well as their possibility for benefiting equitably.

Violence against women and girls undercuts the potential for achieving equality, development and peace and security - the critical goals established over the past 60 years by the international community, and reaffirmed by world leaders in 2000 and 2005. Unless explicit attention is given to identifying and addressing violence against women, the serious health, social, and economic consequences will continue to hinder progress in all areas of human development, something the world can ill afford.

How can this pandemic be halted? The horrific statistics at all levels and the dramatic individual stories and pictures of violence against women and girls, do not lend themselves easily to optimism and hope. The gaps and challenges in preventing violence, protecting the rights of women and girls and providing an effective response are serious ones. And yet recent work, including the indepth study of the United Nations, has indicated that there are drivers of change which we must clearly identify and systematically and effectively utilize to create a groundswell of awareness and action for change.

One of the most critical drivers of change is the work of civil society. For decades, grassroots women's organizations and women's rights movements have tirelessly worked to bring the issue of violence against women out of the private domain into public attention and the arena of State accountability. The attention accorded to violence against women today at all levels is in large part due to the work of these groups, networks and movements. The fantastic mobilization of civil society, for example around the 16 Days of Activism against Violence, is a clear manifestation of the passion, creativity, and determination of women around the world to bring violence against women and girls out of the "shadows" and into the spotlight of public scrutiny.

A further positive lever for change is the fact that we do have today a comprehensive international legal and policy framework on violence against women. The required standards for action by States to meet their commitments and obligations are well established. Research and statistics have shown clearly, however, that States have failed in their responsibility to implement the framework at national level. The fact that the in-depth study makes this clear is an important step forward.

The UN in-depth study makes a positive contribution in illustrating the way forward by highlighting critical measures for achieving measureable progress. The title of the study "From words to action" indicates that the aim is to result in concrete action by all stakeholders.

Let me briefly outline what I believe are some of the critical contributions of the study. Firstly, it establishes irrevocably that male violence against women and girls is a violation of their human rights. The study also clearly points to the obligations of States under the legal framework, to protect women and girls from violence, to hold perpetrators accountable, and to provide justice and remedies to victims.

The study seeks to strengthen political will to move forward and to increase the accountability of those responsible for action – particularly States. It highlights ways by which political will and accountability can be demonstrated, through for example,





men commit such violence. Men holding positions of power and influence have a particular responsibility to become actively engaged.

The increased focus on the gains and benefits to men of gender equality, and the constructive work on developing alternative masculinities which can free men from the constraints of patriarchy, are also important in the work on addressing violence against women.

The recognition that violence against women and girls is rooted in inequality and discrimination is critical for finding adequate solutions. Efforts to eliminate violence must clearly focus on eliminating the discrimination on which it is based.

The acknowledgement that the widespread impunity for violence against women, at so many levels, is completely unacceptable is also a positive step. Impunity is a key element in perpetrating violence. When States do not hold perpetrators accountable, the culture of impunity which develops leads to a vicious cycle of reinforced inequality, normalization of violence, and denial of justice. Effectively addressing impunity requires concerted efforts to change the underlying values, attitudes and prejudices that foster inequality, discrimination and violence.

To move forward we must recognize the long way we have come, the tremendous commitments, the struggles and the many achievements made. We need to commemorate and celebrate our victories. The more we achieve, the more we know we can accomplish. We must find ways to creatively build on the significant gains made, to scale up efforts and ensure sustained positive

and the follow up to the UN study. The Commission also addressed, as a priority issue, violence against girls. This morning at the UN commemoration of International Women's Day, the Secretary-General called for an annual event on violence against women in the General Assembly and called on the Security Council to establish a mechanism to address violence against women and girls in conflict situations.

Many individual women and girls suffering violence are today still left without recourse and without any means to change their situations in positive ways. We, on the other hand, have the power to do something. Every woman and man can and must make a commitment to work to eliminate violence against women and girls. We can no longer accept that violence against women and girls is the most common crime in the world; and the least punished crime. There are no grounds for tolerance of such violence and no tolerable excuses. Violence against women is always a violation of human rights; it is always a crime; and it is always unacceptable. As one of the speakers at the commemoration in the UN this morning urged: We must all help to "tell the story". The whispering must end; there must be an outcry. Enough is enough. The time to end violence against women and girls is now.

Each one of us here tonight *can* make a difference.

Thank you.