



# SAY NO – UNiTE

## End Violence against Women

### Highlights from 2008 and 2009

#### 5 Million and Counting – From Advocacy to Action



On 25 November 2008, UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman presented 5,066,549 signatures to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon - voices of people from around the world who had added their names to UNIFEM's **Say NO** initiative to urge Governments to make ending violence against women and girls a top priority. Building on the momentum of this first phase, and as a direct contribution to the UN Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence

against Women campaign, UNIFEM is stepping up the initiative under the title **Say NO - UNiTE**. Launching in November 2009, **Say NO - UNiTE** aims to trigger and highlight actions by individuals, governments and civil society partners. Actions can range from advocating for legislation or reaching out to students at schools, to volunteering at local shelters or donating funds towards programmes that protect women and girls from violence. Every action is counted to showcase the global groundswell of engagement that exists on the issue. The initial target is to record **1 million actions in one year**. Described below are some highlights from the first phase of **Say NO**:

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## GOVERNMENTS

### Eurasian Women Say NO

At a special session dedicated to **Say NO** during the Second Eurasian Women's Summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, on 25-26 June 2008, the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Zagipa Balieva, led over forty representatives of government institutions and women's business associations from Latvia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan in signing on to the UNIFEM Initiative.



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### Ibero-American Leaders Say NO



The Heads of States of 17 Ibero- American countries added their names to UNIFEM's **Say NO** to Violence against Women initiative on the occasion of the eighteenth Ibero-American Summit in El Salvador in October 2008. Their support underscored the agreement reached by Ibero-American States during the Summit, urging the Ibero-American General Secretariat and the Ibero-American Youth Organization to start an awareness raising initiative to combat violence against women, especially among youth. The countries are:

Argentina, Andorra, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Spain and Venezuela.

### Jordan and Iraq Launch Say NO initiative

UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Bint Talal launched the **Say NO** initiative in Jordan on 20 August 2008, at an event organized by UNIFEM in collaboration with the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW). In a symbolic gesture, participants at the launching ceremony in Amman rose from their seats and rang bells to sound an alarm over the epidemic of violence against women. Signatures were collected in all the governorates of Jordan, as part of a national initiative against gender-based violence. The Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, Dr. Mahmoud Mashhadani, signed on to **Say NO** and invited all Iraqi men and women to join him. A number of other Iraqi parliamentarians added their names during a special session organized by the Women's Committee of the Council of Representatives and UNIFEM on 27 August 2008. Notebooks were distributed for collecting signatures all over Iraq. Adding their names at the occasion of a High-Level event in Vienna were also: Prime Minister of Lebanon Fouad Siniora, Prime Minister of the Palestinian National Authority, Salam Fayyad and Foreign Minister of Jordan, Salah Eddin Al Bashir.





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### Governments of Senegal, Tanzania and Seychelles Answer a Call to Action



The Government of Senegal was the first government to sign on to **Say NO** in early 2008. Awa Ndiaye, the Senegalese Minister of Family Affairs, Women's Entrepreneurship and Microfinance (picture), delivered the signatures of Senegal's President, Abdoulaye Wade, Prime Minister Cheikh Hadjibou Soumare, and 23 Government Ministers to UNIFEM Headquarters on 4 March.

Tanzania, led by President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete (picture), translated its commitment to action by launching a multi-sectoral national committee for reviewing and strengthening the national action plan on violence against women. Furthermore, police officers were trained to provide support to survivors of violence and the Minister for Community Development, Gender, and Children, Hon. Margaret Siita, in collaboration with the company Vodacom, launched a national public awareness drive using SMS messaging. At a ceremony on 22 July 2008, which was witnessed by UN Deputy Secretary-General Asha Rose Migiro, Prime Minister Pinda led the Tanzanian National Assembly in signing onto UNIFEM's **Say NO to Violence against Women** initiative. The Seychelles Minister of Health and Social Development, Marie-Pierre Lloyd, signed on behalf of the Seychellois Government on 17 July, when she introduced the National Strategy on Domestic Violence and launched a website on gender equality. Seychelles is now working to strengthen legislation on domestic violence.



### Governments of Nepal and Timor-Leste sign on



The Minister of Women, Children and Social Welfare in Nepal, Pampha Bhusal, added her name on 9 July, during a panel to share the findings of the UN Secretary-General's Report on Violence against Women. Demonstrating the Timorese Government's commitment to end violence against women, the President of the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Fernando Lasama de Araujo on behalf of President Ramos-Horta, launched a

national **Say NO** initiative in Dili together with Prime Minister Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão on 10 September (picture). The launch of the national **Say NO** initiative was complemented by a number of activities aimed at raising public awareness of gender-based violence and collecting signatures for **Say NO**.



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### UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman Welcomes Australian Government Action



*Time for Action* – the title of the report released by the Australian National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children in April 2009, triggered an immediate response. Confirming its leadership in the development of a long-term plan to reduce violence against women, the Australian Government committed to progressing immediately 18 of the 20 priority recommendations of the National Council's report, which include the development of a national primary prevention framework and the establishment of a telephone and online crisis support service. UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman welcomed the response: "I am very proud that the Australian Government, and the Prime Minister himself, see this as a most serious matter and a national priority."

The National Council was established in May 2008, with the task of providing the Government with advice on the development of an evidence-based National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. In November 2008, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Stephen Smith, the Minister for the Status of Women, Ms. Tanya Plibersek, along with Attorney General Robert McClelland, signed on to **Say NO** on behalf of the Government of Australia, and strengthened their commitment to the issue by announcing Australia's accession to the UN CEDAW Optional Protocol. Minister Plibersek said: "Acceding to the Optional Protocol will send a strong message that Australia is serious about promoting gender equality and that we are prepared to be judged by international human rights standards."

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### US and Canada Say **NO** to Violence against Women

The United States Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, signed on to **Say NO** on 18 November 2008. Looking ahead she said: "As UNIFEM's '**Say NO** to Violence against Women' initiative enters its second year, we should dedicate ourselves to creating awareness among individuals and communities of the great damage violence against women inflicts, and commit ourselves to end this atrocity." Canada's Minister of State for the Status of Women, Helena Guergis, also signed on in November and urged the people of Canada to join the initiative and learn more about the issue.





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### First Philippine City Joins Say NO



In the Philippines, Quezon City launched a drive to collect one million signatures for **Say NO** at the opening of the Women's Month 2009 celebrations. Quezon City was the first city in the Philippines' National Capital Region to pass a code and institutionalize measures for the protection of women and children. At the national level, the Philippine government made a historic commitment to promoting gender equality by signing the country's

Magna Carta of Women in August 2009. In Manila, President Gloria Arroyo formally enacted a legislation for gender equality that women's rights groups have been lobbying for in the last seven years. The landmark legislation is aligned with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and includes provisions like training all government personnel involved with gender-based violence work in human rights and gender sensitivity, and giving men and women equal status on the issuance of stewardship contracts and patents.

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### Europe 2008 - A Year of Action

Throughout the first phase of **Say NO**, government officials from all over Europe responded to the global call by signing on to **Say NO** and vowing to put the issue on the national agenda. Adding her name to **Say NO** in March 2009, the Italian Minister for Equal Opportunities, Mara Carfagna, announced that she would host a ministerial-level International Conference on Violence against Women in the context of Italy's G8 Presidency. Held in September 2009, the conference outcome document calls for international protection standards, acknowledgment of women's role in peace-building, priority on education in order to foster gender equality, and the political commitment of individual governments.



Overall, representatives of the European Commission and heads of state or ministers from the following European countries signed on: Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.



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### PARLIAMENTS

#### Parliaments of the World and Women Speakers Join the Say NO Network



More than 200 parliamentarians from some 70 countries signed on to the **Say NO** initiative during the 119th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly in October 2008. On this occasion, President Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the new President of the IPU stated that “violence against women remains a major issue on the international human rights and parliamentary agenda.” The IPU has pledged to step up action in this field and launched a three-year program aimed at supporting parliaments in making an end to violence against women a national priority. In July 2009, women speakers and deputy speakers of 15 national parliaments as well as the Arab Transitional Parliament signed on to UNIFEM’s **Say NO to Violence against Women** initiative at the IPU-organized *Fifth Annual Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament* and agreed to make the issue a priority in their work (picture). One key issue of the conference was the necessity of national legislation on violence against women in line with international commitments, especially CEDAW, as well as the need for effective implementation. Speakers from the following countries signed on to **Say NO**: Albania, Australia, Austria, Ghana, Hungary, Lesotho, Namibia, Netherlands, Pakistan, Rwanda, Serbia, Swaziland, Switzerland, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom, Arab Transitional Parliament.

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#### European Parliament Calls for a Year on Zero Tolerance of Violence against Women

The global fight to end violence against women and girls gathered significant momentum in April 2009 as the European Parliament called on the European Commission to designate a “European Year on Zero Tolerance of Violence against Women” as part of the adoption of a “Written Declaration on the **Say NO** to Violence against Women initiative”. The Swedish Member of the European Parliament and Vice Chair of the Women’s Rights Committee, Ms. Eva-Britt Svensson, successfully led the effort among the members of the European Parliament. UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador and **Say NO** spokesperson Nicole Kidman congratulated the European Parliament members for signing on: “Your 408 signatures translate into the adoption of a highly significant written declaration. It will mobilize widespread government and public support for meaningful investments in services and resources for survivors.”





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### CIVIL SOCIETY

#### Say NO in Thailand Engages Youth



In Bangkok, hundreds of enthusiastic male and female university students took to the streets as part of **Say NO**. Overall, over three million Thai added their names to **Say NO**. Building on this momentum and in a continued effort to engage youth, UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador for Thailand, Princess Bhajrakitiyabha, then launched the school-based *Youth Say NO to Violence against Women* programme, organized by UNIFEM in collaboration with the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), the Ministry of

Education and the Ministry of Justice. Students explored the extent and variety of gender-based violence, talked about their personal experiences and visited crisis centers to get a first-hand impression of services needed. Each school came up with initiatives to protect women and girls in their communities, which were presented to HRH Princess Bhajrakitiyabha, who has been a driving force of **Say NO** in Thailand and who presided over the closing ceremony on the final day of the training. The youth program is expected to continue throughout Thailand and feed into the second phase of the UNIFEM initiative.

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#### Leaders of Faith Say NO

Whether Buddhist or Christian, Hindu or Jewish, Muslim or Indigenous – violence against women cuts across all religions, beliefs or faith based groups. With “**Restoring Dignity - Religions join to end violence against women**” Religions for Peace (RFP), a partner of **Say NO**, is leading a global initiative to end violence against women through its inter-religious network. Youth, religious leaders or survivors of violence – everyone is invited to join the initiative and **Say NO**. Every action will be counted by RFP as well as by the **Say NO** record of activities on [saynotoviolence.org](http://saynotoviolence.org). UNIFEM launched its partnership with Religions for Peace at an inaugural meeting on 25 September 2008 in New York. At the event, senior religious leaders pledged to help stop violence against women and added their names to UNIFEM's initiative.





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### Catherine Deneuve, Hillary Swank, Sir Bob Geldof Show Their Support

Internationally acclaimed artists, social activists and politicians, including Catherine Deneuve, Hillary Swank, Christopher Lee, Sir Bob Geldof and German Development Minister Heidemarie Wiecek-Zeul, added their names to the **Say NO** initiative at the Cinema for Peace annual gala event on 11 February in Berlin, Germany. Hundreds of other attendees followed suit. The gala, held to coincide with the International Film Festival in Berlin, raised more than US\$100,000 for the UNIFEM-managed UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.



### Over 125,000 Chinese Help Raise \$100,000 to End Violence



The China Law Society and NetEase - one of the largest Internet service providers in China - created a Chinese version of the **Say NO** to Violence against Women initiative website. Over 125,000 Chinese signatures were handed over to UNIFEM on 6 March 2008, helping to match a challenge grant from the UN Foundation, which brought \$100,000 to the UNIFEM-managed UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.

### Fiji - Volunteers Collect 12,000 Signatures in two weeks

In Fiji, UNIFEM recruited and trained 25 highly motivated university students as volunteers, who engaged people on the streets, in universities, theatres and opera, and in government ministries, by collecting signatures and disseminating information. Volunteers wearing special **Say NO** T-Shirts were able to collect 12,000 signatures in only two weeks.



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### Colombia - UNIFEM Steps up Initiative at Rock al Parque Music Festival



UNIFEM and the MDG Comprehensive Programme against Gender Violence in Colombia joined forces to promote the UN Secretary-General's [UNiTE to End Violence against Women](#) campaign at the Rock al Parque music festival 2009 in Bogotá. The Mexican singer Ely Guerra served as spokesperson for UNIFEM, disseminating its messages to festival guests and local media. In an effort to involve youth, UNIFEM volunteers handed out more than 25 thousand

informative brochures on violence against women, and video messages were shown between band performances during the three-day festival, attended by 350 thousand people. At the largest-ever music festival in Latin America, volunteers had already collected 21,213 signatures for UNIFEM's **Say NO** to Violence against Women initiative in 2008.

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### UNIFEM Swiss National Committee Takes to the Streets to Say NO

The Swiss National Committee launched a public signature drive in Berne on 24 September 2008, inviting the people on the streets of Berne to join UNIFEM's **Say NO** to Violence against Women initiative, and engaging the media to raise awareness about the issue. The Committee also appealed to Parliamentarians in front of the House of Parliament to sign on to **Say NO**, as a public expression of their commitment to address the issue through cohesive action. Many of the Parliamentarians, as well as Alexander Tschäppät, Major of the City of Berne added their names to **Say NO**.





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### UNIFEM Partner AVON supports Say **NO**

Since 2008, when UNIFEM and Avon launched their public-private partnership on International Women's Day, Avon Products has been a strong and reliable UNIFEM partner in promoting women's empowerment and ending violence against women. Through the sales of the empowerment bracelet, backed by a matching grant of the Avon Foundation, the company donated USD 1 million to the UNIFEM-managed UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women in 2008, renewing this commitment in March 2009 with a contribution of USD 250,000. In support of **Say NO**, Avon reached out to sales representatives worldwide and encouraged them to sign on to the initiative.



UNIFEM Executive Director a.i. Joanne Sandler, Global Summit moderator Alexis Glick, Avon CEO Andrea Jung, actress Reese Witherspoon, finance expert Suze Orman, and Mrs. Ban display their Women's Empowerment Bracelets. (Photos: Avon.)