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PRESS RELEASE

UNIFEM Launches Global Action Platform to End Violence against Women

*Kenyan Minister for Gender and UNIFEM Executive Director
call for enhanced services and support for survivors*

For immediate release

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Nairobi, Kenya — United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) today launched the global advocacy initiative *Say NO – UNiTE to End Violence against Women*, which will stimulate, count and showcase actions on ending violence against women. The innovative platform will spotlight global efforts and demonstrate the groundswell of support and actions on the issue.

Based on country data, it is estimated that up to 70 percent of women experience physical or sexual violence from men in their lifetime. *Say NO – UNiTE to End Violence against Women* is a global call for action to end this pandemic violence. The multi-year initiative will contribute through advocacy and outreach to the high-profile UN Secretary-General-led campaign *UNiTE to End Violence against Women*. The initial target is to reach 100,000 actions by March 2010 and 1 million actions in one year. Actions to be showcased and counted can range from reaching out to students at schools, to volunteering at local shelters, advocating for legislation or donating funds towards programmes that protect women and girls from violence. The luxury watch manufacturer OMEGA announced a challenge grant of US\$50,000 for the first 50,000 actions, a result of cooperation with UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman. The money will go to organizations working on the ground.

Kicking off the international effort, UNIFEM Executive Director Inés Alberdi in Nairobi along with the Kenyan Minister of Gender, Children and Social Development, Esther Murugi Mathenge, met with patients and medical staff at the Gender-Based Violence Recovery Centre at Kenyatta Hospital, which provides a one-stop shop to survivors of sexual violence. The centre is run in partnership with the organization Coalition on

Violence against Women, COVAW, a UNIFEM partner. They also saw first-hand work to prevent gender-based violence as they interacted at Ngara High School with girls, who are participating in leadership, mentorship and self-protection programmes led by the Kenyan child rights organization The Cradle, another UNIFEM partner.

Speaking after her meetings, Ms. Alberdi said: “We know that violence against women is a problem with solutions. What I have seen first-hand today in Kenya is the impact of effective work at the grassroots level, yet there is an urgent need for governments to make this issue a top priority and take decisive action. UNIFEM is launching today the *Say NO – UNiTE* initiative to trigger actions from all walks of life and engage people to come together and end violence against women.”

Applauding the launch of the innovative advocacy platform, Minister of Gender, Esther Murugi Mathenge, said: “Ending violence against women is a top priority of the Kenyan Government, and I am personally very committed to the cause. I will continue to work towards delivering more services and resources for survivors as well as prevention programmes. Taking this opportunity, I also call upon all segments of society, including the private sector, NGOs, academics, and in particular men to get involved with this issue so as to usher in lasting change.”

The *Say NO – UNiTE* initiative, which will count actions by individuals, governments and civil society partners, has already gained the support of more than eighty launch partners from across the world. Coinciding with the launch, the multi-lingual broadcaster Euro News will air throughout the month of November a public service announcement with UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman, which calls on every individual to say no to all forms of violence.

Say NO builds upon the momentum generated in 2008 during its first phase, when more than 5 million people signed on to a global internet campaign to make ending violence against women a top priority worldwide. Heads of State and Ministers from 69 governments and more than 600 parliamentarians have added their names to the *Say NO* campaign since then.

For list of launch and supporting partners, click here:

<http://www.saynotoviolence.org/say-no-around-world/who-says-no/civil-society-organizations>