

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**OFFICIAL ADDRESS FOR THE LAUNCHING OF  
THE NATIONAL STRATEGY ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND  
THE GENDER SEYCHELLES WEBSITE**

**17<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2008 ICCS, BY MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
MRS MARIE-PIERRE LLOYD**

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Ministers  
Distinguished Guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Family or domestic violence is a universal problem of pandemic proportions. At least one out of three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime.

If you are appalled by this statistic, the figures for Seychelles are no less appalling. Research carried out by the Gender Secretariat in my Ministry, indicates that at least 31% of women have been victim to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in their life. The Study also revealed that 11% of the women sampled admitted to having been coerced into sex by an intimate partner, with 21 becoming pregnant and 8 contracting a sexually transmitted disease as a direct consequence of such violent acts.

It is against this background that we meet today to show our solidarity with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) not just because we recognize the importance of the saying 'No to violence against Women', but most importantly because we believe that domestic violence should no longer be tolerated in our society.

It is opportune that this event is being organized in the year that we are celebrating the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Constitution. We have heard it before and I shall repeat it again today; Domestic violence constitutes a serious abuse of the human rights and freedoms outlined in our constitution. Our Constitution is a living document; it enshrines our rights and aspirations and if we are to honour it we must make it a living testimony of our actions by honouring our rights and the rights of our fellow human beings.

The days when victims stayed quiet and suffered in silence should be long gone. The excuses and justifications that domestic violence is a domestic issue to be resolved in the family have lost all credibility. We should recognize and call the problem for what it is - a crime.

Domestic violence is a crime against the very people we profess to love and are supposed to protect. It is a fundamental development obstacle because when violence hinders women or men from learning, earning or actualizing their full potential, national development cannot occur successfully. The economic cost of violence against women is considerable, not only through the direct costs to our health care services, but also the loss of productivity and other in-direct consequences. Violence against women impoverishes individuals, families and communities, reducing the economic development of our nation.

The Government of Seychelles has recognized the need to act towards stopping this serious national problem. Cabinet approved the National Strategy on Domestic Violence in January this year. It is a comprehensive document outlining **how** government, civil society and private sector agencies can collaborate to plug the gaps in the current structures and processes to deal with the issue.

The Strategy is a testimony of our Government's commitment to address domestic violence in its totality. It is a result-oriented document that protects some of our basic Constitutional rights and freedoms, aiming to make a life free of violence and the fear of violence a norm for every woman, man and child.

I thank all those who have participated in the formation of the National Strategy on Domestic Violence. The time and effort we have contributed to reverse this tide will certainly pay off if each one of us continue to play our part.

The new website of the Gender Secretariat, which will bring this small unit on-line and into the twenty first century, will allow its staff to connect with its national and worldwide network of partners and stakeholders more easily.

I take this opportunity to thank the Department of ICT for agreeing to develop and host the website and extend our gratitude to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) for their support to this project.

As I mentioned earlier, today's event is linked to the UNIFEM's Say No to violence against Women campaign, which was launched on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2007. This is a global Internet-based advocacy effort on ending violence against women, and was set up in support of the UN Secretary-General's multi-year Campaign to End Violence against Women. To date the Governments of Senegal, Tanzania and Spain have already lent their support to the campaign, with more than 230, 000 individuals having signed the UNIFEM's "Say No petition". Let me add, that by the next *International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women*, on 25<sup>th</sup> November this year, UNIFEM aims to hand over to the UN Secretary –General one million signatures or more.

The government of Seychelles joins other governments in supporting this petition. Shortly I will be signing it on behalf of the government. Subsequently, I would like to invite you all present here today and also the rest of Seychellois society to also sign the UNIFEM e-petition, to send a

clear message that we, the people of Seychelles, condemn violence and are proud to stand and say NO to violence against women. Signing this global petition at this historic launching event demonstrates our commitment to end this crime.

I thank you.