

**52nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
39th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission**

**Joint dialogue on indicators to measure violence against women
28 February 2008
Moderator's Summary**

1. The Commission on the Status of Women and the Statistical Commission held a joint dialogue on indicators to measure violence against women. The event was moderated by H.E. Mr. Olivier Belle, Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women and Ms. Heli Jeskanen-Sundstrom, Vice-Chairperson of the Statistical Commission. The panelists were: Ms. Grace Bediako, Government Statistician in the Ghana Statistical Service, Ms. Linda Laura Sabbadini, Director, Division for Surveys of Living Conditions and Quality of Life of ISTAT in Italy and Ms. Sonia Montaña, Chief of the Women and Development Unit in ECLAC. Ms Bediako presented the proposal for a set of international indicators to measure the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women put forward by the expert group meeting organized by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), in collaboration with ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA, Geneva, 8 to 10 October 2007 (see http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/IndicatorsVAW/IndicatorsVAW_EGM_report.pdf for the report of the meeting).

2. The Beijing Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 identified violence against women as one of the 12 critical areas of concern that required urgent action to achieve the goals of equality, development and peace. The Platform urged Governments to build national statistical capacity to collect data on violence against women. This call was subsequently reiterated by intergovernmental bodies, including the General Assembly at its twenty-third special session which urged Governments to develop an international consensus on indicators and ways to measure violence against women. The General Assembly in resolution 61/143 requested the Commission on the Status of Women and the Statistical Commission to develop a set of indicators to assist States in assessing the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women.

3. Participants welcomed the joint dialogue and the leadership of the two Commissions in moving forward the development of international indicators to measure violence against women, and stressed the importance of this work. Such indicators and the data collected to support them would increase the visibility and give a clearer picture of the scope of violence against women, and of trends within and between countries. They would significantly enhance States' capacity to put in place effective policy and other measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women. Development of a common set of indicators on violence against women at global level should take into

consideration existing initiatives, as well as the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

4. Participants welcomed the very valuable contribution made by the expert group meeting, and expressed support for the set of indicators presented, that is, prevalence rates on physical violence, sexual violence, intimate partner violence and certain harmful practices (female genital mutilation and early marriage). Participants suggested that this list constituted a starting point, and future work was necessary to further expand and refine this list of indicators. Examples of areas to be addressed in future work included: further disaggregation by population subgroups, such as racial and ethnic minorities, migrants and persons with disabilities; additional forms of violence against women, such as violence in the workplace, and psychological and economic violence. Participants also suggested that, based on priorities, capacities and needs, the set of indicators could be expanded at the national level with other relevant statistics. While violence against men was also an important issue requiring attention, the current priority should be on efforts to measure violence against women to strengthen the knowledge base and the effectiveness of response.

5. Participants drew attention to data collection and indicator development efforts at national and regional levels, and noted that such initiatives had resulted in increased policy interventions to address violence against women. Such efforts included dedicated violence against women surveys, as well as the inclusion of modules on violence against women in existing surveys. Sample surveys were excellent instruments for collecting reliable data on violence against women. Participants also emphasized that data collection on violence against women should receive the same level of importance as data collection on economic and social aspects, such as poverty, work, and other phenomena which were traditionally measured by national statistics.

6. Participants highlighted the crucial role national statistical systems played in providing, improving and disseminating data on violence against women. The involvement of the national statistical offices in the collection and dissemination of statistics on violence against women added to the credibility and quality of the data, and was seen as an important indication of a State's political will to measure violence against women. Such involvement would also assure that ethical principles, including confidentiality and equal dissemination to all users, would be adhered to. It was suggested that national statistical offices were best placed to carry out surveys on violence against women. Where such bodies lacked the necessary capacity, the expertise of research organizations or universities could be utilized. Participants recognized the need for capacity building and institutional development to ensure the involvement of the national statistical offices in the collection and dissemination of statistics on violence against women.

7. Participants identified a need to harmonize methodologies for the collection of data and statistics on violence against women. There was also a need for international guidelines for the collection and dissemination of statistics on violence against women,

including with regard to concepts, definitions, and survey questionnaires so as to improve the quality and comparability of statistics across countries.

8. Participants emphasized that the collection of data on violence against women required commitment and the allocation of human and financial resources. Political will was critical to support the development of indicators and statistics on violence against women and to ensure that such statistics would result in policy changes. Dialogue and collaboration between the producers of statistics, in particular the national statistical offices, and the users of statistics, including the national machineries for the advancement of women and line ministries, was crucial for identifying data needs and promoting the use of data. National machineries for the advancement of women played an important role in advocating for the collection of statistics on violence against women, and for allocation of resources for this purpose. The importance of collaboration with other stakeholders, including NGOs and civil society, was also highlighted.

9. The intention of the Statistical Commission to establish a “Friends of the Chair” group to study the proposed indicators to measure violence against women and to report the results to the fortieth session of the Statistical Commission in 2009 was welcomed. The need for the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to work on this issue and to emphasize the importance of political will in support of measuring the scope of violence against women was also noted.