



THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

Amal
Italy
G8

17 July 2009

Excellency,

I would like to thank you for your letter inviting me to participate at the G8 International Conference on Violence Against Women to be held in Rome on 9 and 10 September 2009.

It is with great pleasure that I accept your kind invitation. Your office may wish to liaise with Mr. Pio Smith regarding the details of the programme (tel: 212-963-6217, email: smithpio@un.org).

I look forward to welcoming you in New York on 10 August when we will discuss further the Conference's objectives and outcomes. I am grateful also that my officials have been invited to contribute in the draft outlining of the Conference programme.

I commend your for having taken the initiative of organizing this conference and for bringing this tragic issue of violence against women to the G8 stage.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Asha-Rose Migiro

Her Excellency
Ms. Maria Rosaria Carfagna
Minister for Equal Opportunities of Italy
Rome

JUL 17 2009

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
CABINET DU SECRETAIRE GENERAL

REFERENCE:

17 July 2009

Excellency,

The Deputy Secretary-General would be grateful if you could forward the enclosed letter to Her Excellency Ms. Maria Rosaria Carfagna, Minister for Equal Opportunities of Italy.

A copy of the letter is attached for your information.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Parfait Onanga-Anyanga'.

Parfait Onanga-Anyanga
Director
Office of the Deputy Secretary-General

His Excellency
Mr. Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata
Permanent Representative of Italy
to the United Nations
New York

*The Permanent Representative of Italy
to the United Nations*

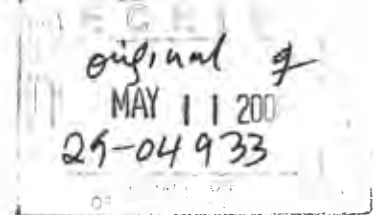
*Italy
G-8*

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New York, MAY - 8 2009

Dear Deputy Secretary General,

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I have the honour to send you an advance copy of a letter addressed to you by the Italian Minister for Equal Opportunities, the Hon. Maria Rosaria Carfagna to invite you to take part to a G8 International Conference on violence against women to be held in Rome on 9 and 10 September 2009.

As outlined in the attached concept paper, this conference, that will contribute to the works of the G8 under the Italian Presidency, should be an important contribution to our common goal, expressed by the Secretary General, to eradicate all forms of violence against women by 2015. .

In view of your global leadership for the advancement of women and in the struggle to eradicate violence of women, I truly hope that you will be able to confirm your participation.

With my warmest regards

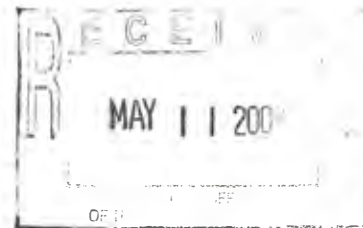
Giulio Terzi
Giulio Terzi
Ambassador

H.E. Asha Rose Migiro
Deputy Secretary General of the
United Nations
NEW YORK



*Presidenza
del Consiglio dei Ministri*

IL MINISTRO PER LE PARI OPPORTUNITÀ



Dear Deputy Secretary General,

In undertaking the task of Presidency of the G8, Italy placed among its objectives that of involving the international community in confronting a series of transversal and global themes variously affecting each individual country both in the North and South of the world.

Violence directed against women is a pervasive and multifaceted phenomenon that strikes all of our societies. It is incumbent on each of us to respond to what, in the final analysis, has shown itself to be one of the most insidious and widespread forms of human rights violation and discrimination.

With this in mind the Italian Presidency of the G8 has organised an international conference on violence against women, to be held in Rome on 9 and 10 September 2009. The aim is to ensure the broadest possible approach and to go beyond the usual pre-established frameworks. Consequently, conference participants are to include not only representatives of governments and international organisations, but also of non-governmental organisations and the civil society, intellectuals, artists and eyewitnesses whose personal experiences can serve to guide the reflection. The resulting contribution will aid to the formulation of the Italian Presidency's message to the G8 foreign ministers and the international community.

It is with great pleasure that I extend this invitation to participate in the conference, convinced that your presence, experience and commitment will be a precious contribution to the discussions and to the achievement of concrete results.

H.E. Asha Rose Migiro
Deputy Secretary General
United Nations



*Presidenza
del Consiglio dei Ministri*

IL MINISTRO PER LE PARI OPPORTUNITÀ

The attached concept paper describes the two-day event's objectives in greater detail; what is still a working agenda will be forwarded to you as soon as it has been finalized. A series of panel discussions—to be conducted, nevertheless, in plenary session—will pinpoint specific aspects of the phenomenon from the perspective of women's full entitlement to human rights, not least in light of the need to accelerate fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals.

It is my genuine hope that you will be able to join us at the conference and in the mobilisation and advocacy efforts that through it we intend to conduct on behalf of the millions of women in the world daily subjected to unacceptable forms of violence and discrimination. Your presence would confirm, at the highest level, the strong determination of the international community in achieving the objective of human rights of women, all over the world.

In anticipation of welcoming you here in Rome, allow me to take this opportunity to express the assurances of my highest consideration,

Maria Rosaria Carfagna

G8 International Conference on Violence against Women
Rome, 9-10 september 2009

No issue for discussion and action by a major international network that has the ability to influence the future of the world is more timely than that of violence against women.

Violence is any form of coercion that hinders us from achieving the objectives of freedom, equality, development and peace for all individuals. It is also any action that does or could cause physical and/or psychological pain or suffering, including the fear or dread of violent conduct, coercion and the loss of freedom, whether in public or private life. Violence against women extends through the gamut covered by this definition. It is global and multiform. Some of its worst manifestations are well known, others attract less attention.

Partly as a result of these features, the debate is divided amongst many international fora: from one situation to another, for each single aspect that is highlighted, many others are ignored. For this reason too it is particularly valuable to promote an opportunity for reflection in the G8 framework: because there is a geopolitics of violence which is differentiated depending on social, cultural, political and religious usages and customs. It is most certainly bright, blood-red in colour when we are talking about non-democratic countries, but even in its more muted shades it lies spread like a carpet all over the world.

To advance our analysis and search for solutions to a problem which, irrespective of its many and specific forms, arises from considering females as objects and not as precious human beings, we must start by recognising that we are faced with a substantive contempt for women's rights as human beings. The protection and promotion of women's human rights is the "lens" through which to study the causes of such widespread violence and the complex social dynamics of discrimination that lie at its root. This is the key for interpretation that the Italian G8 Presidency intends to propose to the International Conference on Violence against Women. Violence against women is specific to and characterised by its geo-political distribution, but essentially unique in its underlying violation of women's human rights. In the forms it takes today, it can be fought through a high degree of coordination and determination that can only come into being through unified and invincible international determination.

Because violence against women is linked to macro-phenomena that concern not just the human psyche and specifically male-female relations, not just crime or psychology, but political and social relations as a whole. It is linked to regimes and their structures, the mentality of the victims and aggressors in an age-old stratification of behaviours and customs. To understand the immensity of the problem, we need only observe its many, atrocious manifestations:

- **Domestic violence:** sadly universal, and certainly not restricted to the countries of the Global South. However, it is only in recent years that the pervasive nature of the problem in its global dimension has emerged. Attention has focused on particularly abhorrent forms such as crimes of honour, but even forced marriages are an aspect of domestic violence, as is any other form of coercion, denial of personal freedom or physical, psychological or economic violence or any other persecutory behaviour such as stalking, which can take place within the home or family in the wider sense.

- **Violence against health:** Exposure to contagion from HIV-AIDS is one of the most fundamental denials of rights. Women are the most numerous victims of contagion as a result of men's deliberate actions. They are used and abused and in turn transmit the virus during pregnancies lacking in medical care. Girls are sacrificed to men affected by the virus in the belief that sexual relations with children will cure them from the disease. Similarly, maternal mortality is part of the same dynamic of violation of women's human rights. 500,000 women die each year in childbirth through the lack of even the most basic health care. In many cases the simple presence of a health operator with basic training could save the lives of these, mainly African, mothers. Of all the Millennium Goals, no. V (reduction of maternal mortality) is the only one where no progress has been made.
- **Violence against girls:** in a hypothetical scale of gravity, violence against little girls is the most unacceptable form of violation of human rights. Violence against women starts with violence against girls and in some cases is suffered even before birth (female infanticide; pre-natal gender selection; systematic refusal to accept female new-borns: these are all common practices). Denial of access to education is just one aspect of social and cultural discrimination that begins in childhood and can take extreme and particularly odious forms that create lasting physical and psychological damage. Included is female genital mutilation (FGM), the first link in a chain of violence that marks out the entire existence of all too many women throughout the world. Child prostitution, the worst forms of child labour, forced labour (female child slaves): these too are forms of extreme violence against the most vulnerable category of all.
- **Violence in armed conflict and emergency situations:** 90% of victims of armed conflicts are civilians, the majority of them women and children. Women and girls are particularly badly hit as a result of their gender and social status. The abuse they suffer during armed conflict ranges from rape, to sexual slavery, to forced prostitution, to forced pregnancy or sterilisation. Systematic rape is used as a weapon of war. More than 75% of displaced populations or refugees are women and girls. Although they ensure the survival of their family and often act instinctively to spread a culture of peace within their communities, women continue to be essentially absent from negotiating tables and policy-making processes on issues of war and peace.
- **Violence in the world of work:** In the workplace, women suffer physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence on a daily basis. These are often extreme forms of discrimination: difficulty entering the labour market, inequality in employment conditions (including pay gaps) and union rights and freedoms, fewer career opportunities, difficulties with work-family balance and greater vulnerability to market conditions, especially during economic crises. So-called multiple forms of discrimination are increasing, where gender-based vulnerability in general is associated with specific forms of vulnerability experienced by immigrants, the disabled, etc. One particularly neglected category, which is increasing as a result of migration, is that of female domestic workers, who are subjected to deplorable violence that often spills over into physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence.

The list of horrors could go on. Violence against women is incredibly diverse, pervasive and protected by an appalling cultural factor: complicity and social conspiracy of silence in the presence of crimes that are considered part of a country's culture. Often by women themselves, unconsciously influenced by the context in which they live.

The violation of women's human rights and, more generally, gender vulnerability, are also transverse and exponential in nature. The international economic crisis is making things worse for women and girls both in the north and south of the world: unemployment, increased responsibilities in the workplace and in the home, reduced earnings and a potential increase in domestic and social violence, and higher school drop-out rates: all are gender-related consequences of the crisis.

We need therefore to act both on the social structure and on the culture, politics, education, religion and psyche of the persecutors and persecuted. Our aim must be to promote the family, the community, the institutions and states that are free from any form of gender-related violence and which promote a culture of respect for women's dignity as human beings.

The Italian G8 Presidency initiative intends to give a voice to women in a global situation that needs to be radically changed, and to thinkers, political leaders and experts who can help us understand the best roads to take to achieve the goal of the global affirmation of women's human rights.

A final document containing the "**G8 Presidency Conclusions**" will be brought to the attention of the G8 Foreign Ministers meeting which will be taking place in New York shortly after the conference, in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly.