

**Press Conference: UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman,  
UN Officials Call for Widespread Participation in UNIFEM's  
Say NO to Violence against Women Campaign  
United Nations, New York  
22 April 2008**

**Statements**

- [UN Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro](#)
  - [UNIFEM Executive Director a.i. Joanne Sandler](#)
  - [UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman](#)
  - [UN Foundation President Tim Wirth](#)
- 

**Statement by UN Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro**

Members of the press,

Thank you for joining us at this relatively late hour.

This is an important moment in the struggle to end violence against women. On 25 February, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon demonstrated his strong commitment by launching a [multi-year campaign on the issue](#). He rightly noted then, that violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable and never tolerable. Following his lead, the UN system is now converging stronger than ever around this issue.

Violence against women is probably the most pervasive human rights violation. One in three women will be beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Violence against women transcends borders, cultures and economic differences. In an increasing number of cases, we have been horrified by reports from countries where rape has been used as a method of warfare. For too long, the world has been silent about these horrific abuses.

UNIFEM's global Internet initiative, [Say NO to Violence against Women](#), through which people can sign their names to a call on ending violence against women makes an important contribution to the Secretary-General's campaign. By raising awareness, it helps to make visible the hidden pandemic of our time. Violence against women is hidden in homes and schools and other places where women and girls should feel safe, but do not because too often they are abused by a family member. It is hidden in the billions of dollars earned by criminal networks from human trafficking, the third most lucrative illicit business in the world after arms and drugs, with some 80 percent of those trafficked women and children.

As UNIFEM's Goodwill Ambassador and as the spokesperson of the *Say NO* campaign, Nicole Kidman has in particular helped to shed light on what too often happens behind closed doors. Nicole, I thank you for your engagement on behalf of the whole UN system.

I am also pleased to see how UNIFEM's *Say NO* initiative is providing a platform to demonstrate commitment and stimulate action. Besides the hundreds and thousands of dedicated people who see the campaign as a way to raise their voices, more than 100 organizations — UN, international and local NGOs — have signed on as partners to the campaign and reached out to their constituencies.

The private sector needs to come on board. I am deeply grateful that the UN Foundation, represented by its President Tim Wirth here today, has committed resources to the UNIFEM-managed [UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women](#). The Secretary General is challenging all segments of society — and particularly male leaders — to step up to put an end to violence against women. Tim Wirth is answering this challenge through the UN Foundation's commitment to address this issue. Tim, we hope that this is just the beginning of a partnership that puts badly needed resources into the hands of those who refuse to tolerate this violence any longer.

We need more of this and other initiatives throughout the UN system in the next years as we join together around the UN Secretary-General's campaign.

I thank you!

---

## **Statement by UNIFEM Executive Director a.i. Joanne Sandler**

The support that we have here today — from Nicole Kidman, the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, and Tim Wirth, President of the UN Foundation — is something that activists to end violence against women could only have dreamed about 10 years ago. It is a sign of progress. But it is far from enough.

We see progress. At least 89 countries have specific laws on domestic violence, more than 100 countries have made rape a crime, 90 have provisions against sexual harassment and 93 on human trafficking. Yet, as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon pointed out, far too often, the violent crimes committed against women go unpunished and the perpetrators walk free. Supporting countries to fully and unswervingly implement the laws and policies that they have passed to end violence against women is the big challenge that we are facing.

UNIFEM's [Say NO](#) campaign contributes to meeting this challenge. By signing on, citizens send an unequivocal message to leaders around the world, letting their governments know that they want to see decisive action. They want to see an end to impunity, services for survivors and — most importantly — strong investments in prevention.

Governments are responding. We are beginning to see decision-makers sign on as a first step in showing that they have heard. The whole Cabinet of Senegal, led by President Wade, signed on to the campaign in March. Over the next months, we hope to see many more governments sign on and commit to take action.

On behalf of the UN system, UNIFEM manages the [UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women](#), the leading multi-lateral mechanism to provide support to innovative efforts that work. The Trust Fund's obsessive focus is on what we call "Meeting the Implementation Challenge." We have laws, policies, and a growing body of knowledge about strategies that work to address violence against women and girls. What we need now is the unswerving political leadership and vast human and financial resources to turn effective innovative examples into mainstream and sustainable solutions.

The *Say NO* campaign, with Nicole Kidman's tireless advocacy, is raising resources for the UN Trust Fund so that it can better support countries to implement their commitments. In the past two years, Trust Fund resources have tripled, reaching US\$15 million for grant making in 2008. But this is far too

little. The Trust Fund receives requests well in excess of US\$100 million annually and could easily attract far greater requests.

We are passionate about securing resources and reach for the Trust Fund because we have seen how strategic investments can enhance prevention and protection from gender-based violence. In Argentina and Peru, a Trust Fund-supported project is making public spaces safer for women by involving citizens in identifying changes that create Safe Cities for Women and Girls, resulting in improved street lighting, transparent bus shelters, and fencing off dangerous vacant lots. A Trust Fund project in Rwanda is providing motorbikes and training to the police so that they can respond more quickly to incidents of domestic violence.

The programmes that the Trust Fund supports in every region of the developing world show that ending violence against women is possible. Through this campaign, our hope is that millions of people will understand that violence against women is not inevitable; it is a problem with a solution, and uniting to demand action is the first step toward making the dream of a world free of violence against women a reality.

Thank you!

---

## Statement by UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman

I have been UNIFEM's Goodwill Ambassador for more than two years now, and I still find it almost impossible to wrap my head around the fact that just by being born a woman, you are at risk of the most appalling and probably most widespread human rights violation of our time.

This is why UNIFEM's Internet campaign [Say NO to Violence against Women](#) is so important. It provides people all over the world with an opportunity to raise their voices and add their names to an ever-growing movement of people demanding that ending violence against women be made a top priority for governments everywhere. I am proud to act as the spokesperson for the Say NO campaign.

Today, from the United Nations, I want to encourage people of all nations to unite behind our call to end violence against women. Invite your friends and colleagues to sign on to the campaign at [www.saynotoviolence.org](http://www.saynotoviolence.org). Inform your family. If you're a teacher, let your students know. If you're active in a religious community, spread the word among the other members. If you're a Facebook user, log on and encourage your virtual friends to come on board. And I want to add: if you're a journalist, cover this issue! I know that there are millions around the world who care deeply about the issue — and I urge all of you to come on board. The more signatures we collect, the stronger a lever the campaign will be to encourage decisive action.

Yet ending violence against women requires commitment AND resources. Today, I would therefore also like to encourage the private sector to contribute to efforts on ending violence against women. Organizations such as the UN Foundation, through the Say NO campaign, have made generous contributions to the UNIFEM-managed [UN Trust Fund](#), and we will hear more about this in a moment. Yet much more is needed.

So my message today is: Every voice counts, and every amount counts. Let survivors of violence around the world know that they can count on us.

Thank you!

---

## Statement by UN Foundation President Tim Wirth

The United Nations Foundation joins UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman in encouraging citizen participation in UNIFEM's Internet initiative, [Say NO to Violence against Women](#). We have been delighted to support this important campaign, which urges an end to violence against women and encourages support for the [UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women](#).

In January 2008, the UN Foundation issued a challenge grant that donated \$1 for each of the first 100,000 signatures to the online petition campaign that is run by UNIFEM, the UN Development Fund for Women. At that time, 18,000 people had signed the petition. Today, about 210,000 people worldwide have added their voices to the campaign. We are very pleased to cut our check to the UN Trust Fund. But more work still needs to be done.

Recent research has demonstrated the shameful scope of violence against women around the world. According to World Bank data, women aged 15-44 are more at risk from rape and domestic violence than from cancer, motor accidents, war and malaria.

The international community must work together to stem this appalling level of violence. In February 2008, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched a [multi-year campaign](#) that aims to secure political will and increased resources to end violence against women and girls, and to galvanize world public opinion to ensure action by policy makers at the highest level.

We all must play a part. UNIFEM's "Say NO" campaign allows people everywhere to go on record and stand up for a world free of violence against women. Taking the simple step of signing on to this campaign sends the message that enough is enough, and that the cycle of violence must stop now.

---

## Related Documents/Links

- [Say NO to Violence against Women – Campaign website](#)
- [News Release: UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman, Leading UN Officials Call for Millions to Raise Their Voices against Violence against Women](#)
- [UNiTE to End Violence against Women – UN Secretary-General's campaign](#)
- [UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women](#)