



UN NEWS CENTRE

With breaking stories and
newswire products from



UN official stresses need for empowerment and political participation of women



UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet

10 June 2011 –

The head of the United Nation entity tasked with promoting gender equality today reiterated that economic empowerment of women, political participation, ending gender-based violence and raising women's involvement in post-conflict peacebuilding are the priorities of the body.

Michelle Bachelet, the Executive Director of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), told a news conference in Geneva that her office would also work with other UN agencies and partners on topics ranging from education for women and girls to sexual and reproductive health.

Asked how she intended to address the problem of sexual violence against women, Ms. Bachelet said prevention was most effective way of dealing with the scourge. Prevention methods included raising awareness and educating both girls and boys to eradicate gender stereotypes in society.

On gender-based violence in conflict situations where UN peacekeeping forces are deployed, Ms. Bachelet said UN Women will use best practices developed by the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to train soldiers prior to their deployment to increase their tactical readiness to respond to reports of sexual violence.

It was also important to end impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence and to develop rapid response teams that could provide legal assistance to women in places that did not have the legal capacity to handle such cases, Ms. Bachelet said. Having more women in peacekeeping roles also had several benefits, including the fact that women felt more comfortable talking to other women about sexual violence, she said.

Ms. Bachelet said UN Women had been actively involved in promoting the participation of women – while respecting local ownership of the process – in the democratic transitions under way in Middle East and North Africa. She said had visited Egypt twice and will next visit Tunisia where a number of women’s organizations have requested assistance from the agency.

She pledged to work with all UN Member States and all sectors of society championing the cause of women’s empowerment.

She noted that some aspects of gender inequality were the result of poverty, stressing that poverty alleviation was another way eradicating such manifestations of injustice as human trafficking, early marriage and child labour.

Addressing a panel discussion on conflict-related violence against women at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Margot Wallström, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict, stressed the need for upholding human rights and enhancing social justice to prevent conflict.

Women’s rights did not end when conflict began, she noted, adding that sexual violence thrived in silence and impunity. The challenge was to prevent the cycle of violence and vengeance, as well as discrimination and disempowerment that gave rise to rape as a tactic of war, she added.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[Women’s participation crucial for democracies, UN officials stress](#)