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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

VIOLENCE THREATENS WOMEN IN ALL STAGES OF LIFE

(New York: 9 December 2005): “Violence against women is so widespread that we must act with urgency,” said Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, as he today launched two new publications on gender-based violence.

Worldwide, one-third of women have been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused. Women are the victims of violent acts of all kinds -- from birth to old age. In conflict and war, their situation becomes even more dire.

As part of the continuing fight against violence against women, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) are today issuing two new documents. The first, *Broken Bodies, Broken Dreams: violence against women exposed*, is the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)’s new photo book, which provides a powerful testimony through photos and personal accounts of the myriad types of violence that define the everyday existence of countless women and girls from birth to death. *The IASC Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Situations: Focusing on Sexual Violence in Emergencies* is a new tool for field actors to prevent and respond to sexual violence in crises.

Globally, women between 15 and 44 years are more likely to be injured or die as a result of male violence than through cancer, traffic accidents, malaria, and war combined. The number of missing females -- those that should currently be living, but are not because of discriminatory practices such as sex-selective abortions, female infanticide and fatal neglect of girls -- is estimated to be between 50 and 100 million.

One hundred million to 140 million girls today have been subjected to some form of medically unwarranted genital cutting. Eighty-two million girls now aged between ten and 17 years will be married before their eighteenth birthdays. Eighty per cent of all people trafficked are women or girls.

“History will judge us harshly if, once aware of the nature and scope of this violence, once outraged by its injustice, we do not choose to act against it,” Egeland said.

All interested in learning more about the scourge of violence against women are invited to attend today’s launch, which will be held in the Express Bar (third floor of the General Assembly building) from 1:15 to 2:15 p.m. The launch is sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Canada. Addressing the event will be Elisabeth Rehn, former Special Representative for the Secretary-General for Bosnia and Herzegovina; Heidi Lehmann, Global Gender-Based Violence Technical Advisor of the International Rescue Committee (IRC); and Gilbert Laurin, Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada; as well as Mr. Egeland.

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