

Press Release

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"Violence against women and children is a human rights violation and concerns us all"

Tromsø (Norway), 18.06.2009 – "The pinnacle of the Council of Europe's longstanding efforts to combat violence against women will be its new Convention which will introduce legally binding standards in this regard. Its purpose is not so much to sanction the violation of human rights once they have occurred but to prevent such violations from taking place at all. We cannot satisfy ourselves to make life easier for the victims, we must make sure that women do not become victims," said Council of Europe Deputy Secretary General Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, at the opening today of the Conference of European Ministers of Justice.

In a recent groundbreaking [judgment](#), the Council of Europe's European Court of Human Rights recognised domestic violence as a gender-based crime. "The only way to bring some sort of change is to use this judgment to change laws, administrative procedures and attitudes to help and to protect all the women suffering from violence," concluded the Deputy Secretary General in her address.

Ahead of the conference, she visited the Tromsø "Children's House" ([Barnehuset](#)), together with the Minister of Justice of Norway, Knut Storberget, and the United Nations Deputy Secretary General, Asha-Rose Migiro.

"This is a practical example of what can be done to prevent and combat violence against women and children. I congratulate the Norwegian authorities, and especially Minister Storberget, for having taken the initiative to organise this conference in Tromsø," said Mrs de Boer-Buquicchio. "Violence against women and children is not a private matter. It concerns us all and we need to act – now!"

"We need to break the silence here in Europe and throughout the world," said Mr Storberget. "Domestic violence is a widespread and serious crime that too long has been invisible both within politics and within our legal systems. We need to reach broad international consensus that this is the responsibility for us as Ministers of justice. This conference is a great opportunity to discuss further measures and new approaches. It is crucial that we help women and children to a life without violence."

"Violence against women is everywhere, on every continent, in poor slums and in rich suburbs," said UN Deputy Secretary General Asha-Rose Migiro. "We are here to help break the silence that contributes to a culture of impunity. We are here to take steps to punish the perpetrators, help the victims and protect all women and girls," she said adding that countries worldwide are adopting action-oriented measures. "Regionally, we have seen encouraging action such as the Council of Europe's discussions on a dedicated convention addressing violence against women," Mrs Migiro concluded.

For more information on the conference, see www.coe.int/minjust and www.coe.int/violence.

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