

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**
An Italian G8 Presidency Initiative
Roma, 9-10 September 2009

PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS

1. At the close of the International Conference on Violence against Women held in Rome on 9 and 10 September 2009 at the initiative of the Italian G8 Presidency, we wish to state with renewed drive and determination that the time has come for a new era of international cooperation and a great alliance by all governments and the civil society to tackle the common challenge of ending all forms of violence against women.
2. Violence against women and girls is an unacceptable form of violation and denial of human rights. For this reason, we wish to reiterate our absolute condemnation of such violence, in all its forms and manifestations. Any act of violence against women and girls – irrespective of where or by whom it is committed – is a crime. It prevents the victims from exercising their fundamental rights and freedoms and from engaging in self-determination free from undue influence or threats.
3. In certain circumstances, violence against women and girls is a war crime and a crime against humanity. The UN Security Council's Resolutions 1325 and 1820 represent important progress in joint action to assert women's rights in situations of conflict and to promote their participation in peace negotiations and post-war reconstruction. We will strive to ensure the fullest possible implementation of these instruments, not least to eliminate the sense of impunity that is still widespread amongst the perpetrators of such crimes.
4. Women are agents of peace. Global peace and security also depend on their actions and their participation, in conditions of equality, in social development and in governance mechanisms at the local, national and global levels. We must undertake to guarantee equal opportunities of access for women and the possibility for them to undergo a transformation from victims of violence to agents of peace, justice, economic and social development. The role of men in reaching these objectives is essential.
5. Women's empowerment is an essential instrument for development, a means of promoting democracy, and an antidote to extremism and social instability. We consider the millions of women and girls who are denied access to education, healthcare, reproductive health, physical integrity, decent work, and equal participation to be the most important unused resource for development. We must make every effort to ensure that international standards to safeguard economic and social rights, as well as human rights, are recognised and applied. Adhering with no reservations to the conventions on the protection of women's rights is a fundamental step in this direction. We also undertake to support initiatives which, at various levels, promote respect for women's rights, such as the UN Secretary General's "UniTE to End Violence against Women" campaign. The funding decided at the G8 Summit in L'Aquila in July 2009 to defend health and food security will achieve its objectives in full only if accompanied by specific actions to promote human rights and combat violence against women.
6. The transformation of our societies as a result of globalisation and its ever increasing migratory movements, calls for the fundamental input of women. This input serves to disseminate a spirit of multiculturalism which should not give way to customs affecting women's dignity and be based on tolerance and mutual respect, and to develop integration policies centered on the compliance with all human rights. Women represent an extraordinary instrument against intolerance, discrimination and xenophobia.
7. A democratic system based on the equality of all individuals and an independent judiciary are essential instruments in combating all forms of violence. The law plays a vital role that, while repressive, is also educational, in protecting women against all forms of abuse, maltreatment and

retaliatory conduct and ensuring that they are able to exercise their rights in full. We must do more, and better, to ensure that we do not dilute – through our actions or inaction – the commitments undertaken at the international level. The time has come for each government to include the promotion and protection of women and girls' rights, from a mainstreaming perspective, in its political and legislative agenda and give priority to education to promote human rights and gender equality, especially among the younger generations.

8. Along with legal protection against all forms of abuse, a radical change in social norms must be encouraged. Including through the key contribution made by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and civil society, initiatives to disseminate and instil the concept of human rights at the community level should be supported. This is the most effective means of promoting a grass-roots culture of respect and inclusiveness and a rejection of violent behaviour and practices against women, regardless of cultural, religious or traditional beliefs.
9. We appeal to the media to perform in full their central role in rejecting degrading social stereotypes. We call on them also to promote the image of women as protagonists and agent of progress in their communities. We call on the media to report all violence and abuse, even when perpetrated within the family, as unfortunately is often the case.
10. The Italian G8 Presidency is committed to move along the path set by the Rome Conference, keeping the question of violence against women at the centre of the international agenda. We are confident that the forthcoming Canadian G8 Presidency will take up the baton entrusted to it by this Conference.