



## **Joint Statement – Standing Together Against Gender-based Violence**

On 25 November, the world observes the International Day Against Violence. This day also marks the start of a global awareness raising campaign - the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence Campaign - that runs annually from 25 November to 10 December.

Violence against women and girls remains one of the most serious human rights violations. This understanding is reflected in the new global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Goal Five on gender equality has a stand-alone target to end all forms of violence against all women by 2030. Worldwide, almost one third of women who have been in a relationship report that they have experienced some form of violence, mostly by their intimate partner.

In Armenia, gender-based violence, and particularly domestic violence, is also a serious challenge. In 2016, according to official data for the first semester, 373 cases of domestic violence have been reported, of which seven were deadly.

We take positive note of all the progress achieved in addressing gender-based violence in Armenia and particularly welcome the efforts of the Armenian Government in initiating the drafting of the Law on Domestic Violence, which will fill a significant legislative gap. We are hopeful that the draft will be finalized soon, and call for a genuine participatory, inclusive and consultative process.

Gender-based violence cannot be tackled in isolation. Concerted efforts of all stakeholders are needed to address violence against women. We encourage all state interlocutors, civil society and the international community to ensure that respective mechanisms and services are in place to support the victims of violence.

Our Armenian partners in civil society help empower women across Armenia and raise awareness of the issue to prevent violence.

The adoption of the Law on Domestic Violence marks the beginning of a long journey. Consistent with the recently issued Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, we recommend to ratify the Convention of the Council of Europe on preventing and combatting gender-based violence against women and gender-based violence against women in the domestic sphere.

We further encourage attention to an effective communications campaign to empower women, and to challenge rigid gender stereotypes and any assumption that violence against women is an acceptable social norm. Efforts should raise awareness that violence against women is a human rights violation and a form of discrimination, and focus on embedding the notion that strong men do not hit women and children.

The international community stands ready to support the Government of Armenia as it moves forward towards creating a legal, policy and cultural environment that considers women as equal members of society and valuable contributors to the development of this country.

---