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PRESS RELEASE

25th of November: International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Making this goal a reality

Geneva, 22 November 2007: On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, OMCT joins women's groups and individuals campaigning worldwide and calls for full implementation of the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women¹. The 25th of November also marks the beginning of the annual campaign "16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence", which focuses this year on "*Demanding Implementation, Challenging Obstacles*" to achieve concrete results in improving women's protection from violence.

The Declaration, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, does not encompass new rights, but rather reaffirms the importance of taking all necessary steps to eliminate one of the most pervasive and widespread human rights violations: violence against women. This is further recalled by the "16 Days" international campaign that since 1991 has symbolically linked the International Day on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the International Human Rights Day (10th of December) as a reminder that gender-based acts of violence are serious violations of the fundamental rights of women. Today, many forms of violence against women are widely acknowledged as amounting to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. This assertion is all the more important in that the prohibition of torture is a peremptory norm of international law that applies to all States and from which there can be no derogation.

All too often governments pay lip service to the concerns of the international community and citizens as regards gender-based violence. But the issue is too serious to be overlooked. Eliminating such violence takes much more than adopting new laws and making pledges in international forums. Violence against women is so deeply rooted in society that real challenges need to be made to gender stereotypes and to the legitimisation of women's subordination through arguments based on "tradition" or "cultural values". Implementation presupposes education and strict enforcement of criminal law. It also requires positive measures to ensure women can speak up without fearing retaliation, repudiation or abandonment. In this respect, needs assessment must be carried out and particularly vulnerable groups identified and protected.

¹ Through Resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993 the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women
(<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N94/095/05/PDF/N9409505.pdf?OpenElement>).

The fundamental nature of the rights enshrined in most human rights instruments and recompiled in the 1993 Declaration mean that no budgetary limit can be claimed as an excuse for failure to implement them. Eliminating gender-based violence is an obligation of result. Article 5 of the 1993 Declaration hints at some of the means to achieve concrete results, many of which have been put forward in recommendations adopted by UN treaty monitoring bodies after careful examination of country situations².

OMCT calls on States and on all those who endeavour to protect and promote human rights to make use of the 1993 Declaration and the 16 Days of Activism to inspire action, adopt strong policies and achieve concrete results.

For further information see www.omct.org or contact: Mariana Duarte, md@omct.org

² In particular, in the Concluding Comments adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and in the Human Rights Committee's Concluding Observations.