

JUSTICE NEWS**Deputy Attorney General James M. Cole Speaks at the U.N. Commission on Status of Women Event Entitled, "Intimate Partner Violence: Effective Interventions"**

New York ~ Wednesday, March 6, 2013

Thank you, Lynn for that kind introduction and your work to address and prevent violence against women and girls – particularly last week, in support of the legislation to renew and strengthen the landmark Violence Against Women Act. It's an enormous victory that the bill has finally passed Congress, and it would never have happened without your tireless work.

It's a pleasure to be here for today's important meeting, and to join with all of you to discuss the strong commitment of the Department of Justice to combatting the violence against women that plagues far too many communities, both within our borders and abroad. As Deputy Attorney General of the United States, I have the opportunity to work with the dedicated men and women of the Department on all aspects of this problem -- from the professionals in the Office on Violence Against Women who work hand-in-hand with organizations and communities to meet the needs of victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, to our prosecutors in the field.

As we've seen too often, domestic violence affects not only the immediate victims, but their families, neighbors, friends, and indeed entire communities. Which is why it demands a coordinated community response. This approach brings together federal grantees, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and non-profit, non-governmental victim advocates not only to share their experiences, but more importantly to use their distinct roles to create a comprehensive, community-based response to domestic violence. The Department seeks to apply this approach in its work on intimate partner violence both domestically and abroad.

In the international realm, together with the support of the State Department and others, the Justice Department has become a leader in the U.S. Government's mission to conduct overseas justice sector development. Over the past two decades of assisting the development of police forces, prosecutors' offices, and judiciaries abroad, the Department has begun to deliberately focus on gender-based violence and the lack of gender equality in the access to justice.

For example, from 2008-2011, the Department implemented the Women's Justice Empowerment Initiative, a specifically-funded assistance program for multiple African countries that featured guidance and training for judges, prosecutors, and police, on techniques for managing criminal cases involving gender-based violence. As part of that effort, among other things, the Department of Justice provided forensic training for medical personnel charged with evidence collection in cases involving rape and other crimes.

More recently, the Department has continued its assistance to curb gender-based violence abroad in a variety of ways, such as a model curriculum developed with Mexican officials on investigating and prosecuting human trafficking, work with officials in Morocco on the treatment of juvenile offenders, and developing a training course for men and boys in Timor Leste to support their roles in ending intimate partner violence.

I am pleased to report that these efforts are yielding positive results. Some of the nations with which we work are beginning to recruit and train female police, female prosecutors and female judges. We also

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support these nations in efforts to develop and implement effective procedures for female victims and witnesses of crime. And we are working with them to amend legal frameworks to define crimes, and impose punishments for those crimes, in a manner that effectively reflects the protection and best interests of women and girls. By informing a broad array of institutions, we are beginning – although it is only a beginning – to encourage our international colleagues to embrace a coordinated community response to intimate partner violence in their home countries.

Here in the United States, since the passage of the original Violence Against Women Act in 1994 – which was strengthened by Congress’s recent action, the Justice Department has been actively working to increase the availability of services for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking and to improve local criminal justice responses to these crimes.

VAWA provided tough criminal penalties to prosecute batterers. It also established within the Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services a number of formula and discretionary grant programs to help communities respond to the needs of women who are victims of, or might fall victim to, intimate partner violence. Thus, the Department of Justice’s work under VAWA goes far beyond prosecutions and includes housing resources and other services that women need to escape domestic violence and rebuild their lives. Together, these grant programs have increased criminal enforcement, provided necessary comprehensive, holistic victim services, and supported critically important prevention efforts.

We have found that by seeding coordinated community response efforts in communities across the country with federal funds and technical assistance, communication and collaboration continues even after federal funding ends. In addition, we’ve seen that a coordinated community response not only improves the quality of victim services and the criminal and civil justice response, but it also often changes the attitudes of the community as a whole towards the devastating crime of intimate partner violence.

Although the Violence Against Women Act has allowed us to successfully engage a broad range of partners to work together to intervene after violent crimes against women have occurred, we are placing a special focus on improving efforts to prevent such crimes before they happen. In doing so, we have expanded the traditional focus on intervention, treatment, and accountability to address the entire cycle of violence at every stage by increasing our understanding and commitment to prevention.

One critical part of that effort is examining the overwhelming numbers of children exposed to violence and the insidious effects of this exposure. A recent study funded by the Justice Department concluded that a majority of children in the United States have been exposed to violence, crime, or abuse in their homes, schools, or communities. In some instances, the consequences of this problem are devastating. A child’s exposure to violence, whether as a victim or a witness, is often associated with long-term physical, psychological, and emotional harm. Tragically, children exposed to violence are also at a higher risk of engaging in criminal behavior later in life and becoming part of a cycle of violence. But through the Attorney General’s Defending Childhood initiative, we are fighting back against this rising trend in bold, collaborate and effective ways.

This initiative combines existing resources across the Department of Justice to focus on preventing, addressing, reducing, and more fully understanding childhood exposure to violence. In 2010, the Justice Department awarded grants to eight sites in cities and tribal communities around the country to develop strategic plans for comprehensive community-based efforts that will further demonstrate the goals of this initiative. The Attorney General also chartered a federal advisory committee that held public hearings with extensive input from experts, advocates, and impacted families and communities nationwide. The Defending Childhood Task Force issued a report that will serve as a blueprint for preventing children’s

exposure to violence and for reducing the negative effects experienced by children exposed to violence across the United States.

It is equally imperative to involve men and boys in the efforts to end intimate partner violence, if we expect them to succeed. Acknowledging the critical roles men play in this prevention, VAWA funding supports multi-faceted strategies that involve men as allies, and as active, positive role models for other men and boys. Using the latest technology combined with hands-on mentorship to reach young men about healthy relationships and change their attitudes about violence, this federal grant program aims to develop new male leaders in the field – leaders who are willing to speak out publicly and act to oppose violence against women and girls and create a ripple effect, encouraging men in many more states and communities to get involved.

Although there is still much work to be done, the United States has made significant strides in developing effective community responses to intimate partner violence that has stolen far too many promising futures – and shattered far too many lives. A core lesson from our efforts is that each community, guided by the voices of victims, must come together to develop the specific responses that will work for their particular community as a whole, and for all of the various cultural groups that make up that community. Our discussion today is an important part of that effort – as it not only signals a call to action – but provides us all with the opportunity to build on the momentum we’ve established and to ensure that the achievements we celebrate today are just the beginning.

Thank you.