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Secretary-General's Message to the Commonwealth

E-Launch Commonwealth Says NO MORE Portal

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Introductory remarks

1. Excellences, distinguished guests, colleagues, partners and friends.
2. It is an honour and privilege for me to be able to be with you today at the virtual launch for the Commonwealth Says NO MORE digital portal. The portal focuses on ending domestic and sexual violence, a particular issue that is very close to my heart.
3. We come together today to pledge our support for this essential campaign because if there is violence and abuse, there will be no peace in our homes, communities nor our Commonwealth family of Nations.
4. **Sexual and intimate partner violence affects 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men globally.** Children who witness violence in the home are three to nine times more likely to be abused themselves. We know that it has a devastating impact on their health, development and educational attainment. Globally, over 750 million women and girls alive today were married before their 18th birthday.
5. As is so often the case with issues of justice and equality, it is not only the moral and right thing to do, it is also the smart thing to do for all our prosperity.
6. The global cost of violence against women and girls was estimated at **\$1.5 trillion in 2016** - making everyone across the world at least **\$200 poorer that year.**

7. Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations and remains largely unreported due to impunity, silence, stigma, fear and shame. This continues to be an obstacle to achieving equality.
8. Accelerating gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is a key mandate of the Commonwealth Charter and is central to our values and the type of family of nations we seek to build. Ultimately, the Sustainable Development Goals cannot be attained without putting an end to violence against women and girls.
9. The past century has witnessed the greatest advances for gender equality in human history, but against this progress, systemic inequality remains persistent and widespread across all domains.
10. As the global community celebrates key milestones of international instruments for gender equality in 2020, the world is facing another human challenge the Coronavirus! The measures taken to address COVID-19 has led to a rise in domestic and sexual violence.
11. Emerging evidence on the impact of essential lockdown and economic fallout arising from the global pandemic, saw surging numbers of emergency calls to helplines of between 25-300 per cent.
12. Tackling this “hidden pandemic” requires concerted action. Mitigating the devastating impacts of the pandemic requires joint collaboration to end domestic violence and sexual assault in our homes, communities, countries and globally.
13. As a Commonwealth, we stand together and ready to tackle this hidden pandemic. Just last week, our Commonwealth Gender and Women’s Affairs Minister came together for their first ever virtual meeting on the impact of COVID-19 to discuss ways to sustain progress on gender equality and tackling Violence Against Women and Girls during the on-going pandemic. This was a powerful demonstration of the Commonwealth’s will and determination.
14. Taking on the devastating impacts of this hidden pandemic of domestic violence requires strong and concerted action to protect women and girls who are being abused, isolated, beaten, kicked and even killed in their homes.

15. And that's exactly what we plan to do - flattening the curve of violence against women and girls across Commonwealth countries.
16. And we must be clear no one country is doing well at this. Wealthy or developing, small or large, liberal or conservative all of us are failing to effectively tackle this problem.
17. Today's launch is therefore fundamental to the work of the Commonwealth, towards achieving our mandate to end violence against women and girls!
18. We are raising our voice and the voices of people around the Commonwealth to advocate for action across society to tackle this deadly pandemic of violence against women and girls.
19. Now is the time for all of us to act, whether a Government, a business, a neighbour or a friend, just as with coronavirus we must all play our part to flatten this awful and deadly curve.
20. If we all work together, we can bring peace in our homes, peace in our communities and peace our beloved Commonwealth of Nations.

Celebrating the Commonwealth Says NO MORE Portal

The CommonwealthSaysNoMore.org digital portal is the first ever pan-Commonwealth platform to address domestic and sexual violence.

The Secretariat worked in partnership with the NO MORE Foundation for 2 years to develop this portal, which provides easy-to-use tools and resources to strengthen the efforts of governments and civil society organisations to support victims and those at risk, as well as train community gatekeepers.

Here are five (5) ways the portal provides the 54 member countries with the tools and resources needed to help end the crisis.

1. Delivery

Governments can download toolkits to establish local campaigns that support survivors, educate communities and help end violence.

2. Support

Citizens can find emergency helplines, bystander guidance and support services, wherever they are in the world.

3. Partnership

Non-profits, governments and businesses can join forces on grassroots and national efforts.

4. Display

Countries can share good practices on preventing abuse, delivering services and protecting survivors.

5. Pledge

Anybody can commit to taking an active role in their communities with a digital pledge.

Concluding Remarks

Through the Commonwealth says NO MORE portal, governments, associations and civil society have access to free library resources, virtual tools and guidelines to increase awareness, set up national campaigns, and develop policies and programmes to support victims, survivors and bystanders.

I now invite you to show your support for this campaign by visiting the portal and making a pledge to end sexual and domestic violence.

Together we can end the scourge of violence, and join the Commonwealth to say **NO MORE** to violence against women and girls for good!”