

**Remarks for the Commonwealth Says NO MORE Campaign Launch Event
as Prepared by Pamela Zaballa, Global Executive Director, NO MORE**

I would like to thank the Secretary-General Rt. Honorable Patricia Scotland and her team for their vision in taking the next step needed in the fight to end domestic and sexual violence. This is the type of leadership that creates lasting change. I would also like to thank the Communications team at ComSec. Without their hard work, dedication and passion for this endeavor, today would not have been possible.

My thanks also to all the Honorable Ministers, High Commissioners, Government delegations, and to all the guests today joining us in this virtual world.

While preparing this address, I thought about what would be the most significant message I would like to leave you all with today, and the answer is simple. I would love you to believe. Believe that it is possible to live in a world where domestic violence is eradicated or happens to very few. Believe that all your efforts can contribute to that goal and that the collective force can generate change.

I have around 20 years experience working in this field. Yes, unfortunately, it is coming to a point when I am starting to think twice if I should admit that! I have met many women who, like me, have worked a lifetime and would argue that they will never see this goal met. However, I want you to think about that the first refuge/shelter in the world started in the '70s. An old house in Chiswick, West London with around seven bedrooms. In its day, it hosted more than 100 women and children who fled from imminent death. A colleague of mine actually had fled to that house with her two children. The stories were of horror, but the bond that group had and the apparent need for such a service were clear. A network of shelters started in the UK, US, and Canada. Today, we can count with just our hands the countries that do not provide some sort of shelter.

I had the pleasure of being the manager of that site in 2005, by then a beautiful house. As a young recently married woman then, I never lived in a world where I could not find such a respite. In 30 years, we went from literally the dark ages, where women would die at home, to the professional service delivery system that many of the Commonwealth countries provide now. There has been tremendous progress.

However, today we cry again. We cry because there are still too many abused women out there, and because having a place to flee is not enough. It's time to get to a world in which every individual is accountable for their action when they commit a crime such as domestic violence and sexual assault. We want a world free of victims, but also of perpetrators. We need to get to a place where we clearly understand what abuse is and when it's being inflicted. To achieve this, we need to stop blaming and focus on educating.

NO MORE is a global prevention organization to end domestic violence and sexual assault. Our network spans over 40 countries with more than 1700 allied organizations. We not only engage with survivors and bystanders, but also work with governments and private sector companies to support their strategies and encourage that they utilize all the mechanisms that they have available to advance a prevention agenda.

The Commonwealth shares our vision. And today, we are proud to be joining in launching the Commonwealth Says NO MORE portal with resources and information where we can all start sharing information and best practices. The portal is a framework. We are counting on all of you to engage, to provide us with more information about your country and its current efforts to stop violence against women and girls, and to allow us to support you in expanding the network and uniting in one strong voice.

People have always seen domestic and sexual violence as a private problem. Unfortunately, many companies, governments, and NGOs also keep the extent of the problem under the rug. We say this is where it ends, and where we engage in sharing, learning, and growing together.

Today I invite you to join us, join in believing that change is possible.

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