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Advancing the Status of Women Worldwide —

25th November 2014

Dear Zontians

Zonta's advocacy campaign "Zonta says NO to Violence Against Women" unites the Zonta world in the global appeal to all Governments to end violence against women and girls once and for all.

As the 16 days of activism start today the 25th of November, I encourage all Zontians to participate actively in the campaign and to contribute with our activities to the strongly needed sustainable change.

Let our voice be loud and clear:



And let everyone know that we Zontians take the necessary steps to eradicate violence against women once and for all.

Violence against women is not a women's issue, but a societal issue. It is often rooted in misinterpretations of history, inadequate laws, culture and religion, but can also be based on social structures and traditional ideas of feminine and masculine identities. Violence against women is most frequently about power and control, and we know its consequences to women's physical, mental and reproductive health.

Sustainable prevention requires an understanding of the root causes and the use of multiple complementary strategies operating on individual, relationship, and the community and society levels, starting early in life during childhood, continuing in the schools and continuing during adulthood.

This biennium Zonta International calls on parents, educators, administrators, law and policy makers to address **PREVENTION OF ROOT CAUSES THROUGH EDUCATION** and to facilitate effective mechanisms that will ensure **ERADICATION** of **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN** once and for all by:

- Supporting **PREVENTIVE** programs promoting gender-equal norms and violence-free environments, and programs that help men to change behavior towards women to one of mutual respect.
- **PROTECTION** of women by providing One Stop Centers with medical/legal/social help for victims. Furthermore, promoting short term shelters and long term affordable housing for women and children, and supporting vocational training for victims to become self-supporting.
- **PROSECUTION** of the perpetrators through a) laws that clearly blame perpetrators, not victims; b) reporting systems and support to victims during legal processes; c) training of police and legal professionals to understand the issues.

As Zontians, and with Conviction, Commitment and Courage, we will defend and preserve the right to equality and to a life free of violence for all and we encourage everyone to join us in this effort.

Warm regards,



Maria Jose Landeira Oestergaard

Zonta International & Zonta International Foundation President

