

**ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE
FRIDAY 16TH NOVEMBER 2007**

Comments by Prime
Minister Grand Chief Sir
Michael Somare

“... a diplomat and a member representing the United Nations, walked up to me and pinned on my left hand side a badge and said to me, “*I now make you an Honorary Member of the Elimination of Violence Against Women*”. Today I am wearing the badge”.

“I am sick and tired of hearing about law enforcing agents continual response that these are domestic issues or an issue between relatives to be sorted out outside of police stations and court. To be fair, I must also add that society must also examine its behaviour. Relatives that collect compensation for these violations on behalf of victims must be ashamed of themselves. Their actions allow perpetrators to get off on a lighter charge and not face the full consequence of the law. Equally, pressures from relatives also force victims to change their pleas and perpetrators continue their unlawful acts unhindered on weaker and vulnerable members of our society. Believe me, Mr Speaker, these cowards neve attack members of the society that can protect themselves.”

“Mr Speaker, next Sunday, November 25, we here in Papua New Guinea will join the rest of the world in observing the United Nations International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women. That day is also known as the White Ribbon day where we will join in this important campaign by wearing a white ribbon.

The white ribbon signifies a personal pledge that we do not condone violence in all its forms against women and children. It also shows our commitment to support community action to stop violence”.

“Mr Speaker, I give you my undertaking as the Parliamentary Leader of the Party and Prime Minister of this country that we will do everything possible to minimize and eliminate these scourge in our community. Let us work together with the Churches, Law Enforcement Agencies and the community at large”.

Dame Carol Kidu,
Minister for Community
Development

“... to introduce a law that all customary marriages must be registered.

It is well known that family violence causes not only misery in families but also considerable disruption to the performance of workers. It is well known that domestic violence is marked by a circle of violence followed by guilt and remorse. unfortunately, it is a cycle that repeats itself over and over again if help and counselling is not available. It is imperative that we increase our government capacity to provide such services and also give support to recognise Churches and NGOs that provide these support services for families”.

“Mr Speaker, there is a poem “*Children learn what they live*”, which gives a very powerful message. It has many lines, one of which is “*if a child leaves with violence, he or she learns to be violent*”. It is documented by research that this is true and it therefore, follows that if we want to reduce violence in our families and communities, we must focus on creating child-friendly and violence free environment.”

“.... the government should institute a Register to record all instances of family and gender base violence at hospitals, clinics and also care centres run by non-government organisations and churches to be used as a basis for planning preventive and supportive measures.”

.... we are a member of the United Nations but like other pacific nations we have a very poor record in terms of rectifying important international treaties and conventions. In fact, we have signed only three (3) treaties relevant to human rights. There are 13 conventions and protocols yet to be signed.

The three (3) that we have signed are: “*The Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC)*, *CEDAW The Convention Against the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women* and *the Convention Against Racial Discrimination*. Of these three (3), we have only entered into the reporting process with the UN Committee on one of them, that is the CRC and not the other two.

This reflects very badly on us globally and is one reason that we get criticised. It is not necessarily that we are not moving towards complying. I believe that to be so, we must put a specific task force in place, including people in the civil society with the relevant divisions of the Department of Foreign Affairs and other relevant areas to attend to this matter”.

The Petitioners called on Parliament to make violence a matter of national importance. It is extremely important for us to listen to their call and to act on it because violence not only destroys the social fabric of our nation, but also has enormous negative economic impact at both the macro and the micro levels”.

Mr Speaker, I ask you to quietly imagine being a woman or a child who is beaten or abused sexually. Let us feel the pain. Let us feel the blood and the bodies, abused and broken, the helplessness and the tears in their eyes”.

Quoted words of Kofi Annan

“Violence against Women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation and it is perhaps the most perverted. It knows no boundaries or geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace”.

Sir Mekere Morauta, Opposition Leader

“Violence in society in its many forms is simply not acceptable”. Society, families and communities should not tolerate it. We should oppose it at all times and we should discourage it, not only by speaking against it but by taking measures, through legislative, policies and patterns of expenditure. All of these we should do to fight against it”. “We must examine these laws to make them more powerful and to target them more precisely and in a more focused way. We need that action now.”

We must equip the law enforcement agencies to make sure that the laws be enforced so that the communities see benefits and feel the protectiveness, or the umbrella that their laws are meant to provide.

Perhaps another important area that we might start thinking about other causes of violence, what brings about violence and who are being exposed to violence because that is another way of fighting violence.”

“The time has come my colleges and parliamentarians to speak up against violence. But it should not be about speaking out but also about taking action”.

Mr Timothy Bonga, MP Nawae Open

“To all the women, do not hide your problems but come out and tell us. It is the only way we can help you or the law can help you. When you hide these crimes, they will get bigger as time goes by”.

Dr. Puka Temu
Deputy Prime Minister

“... I strongly recommend that we look at institutionalising a process. We get the Department and the Minister (of Education) to undertake the curriculum review process so that all these issues of culture ship towards *gutupela pasin* like observing laws, respecting other people especially our girls and women.”

“.... the Parliament should establish a parliamentary committee on violence. ... it is time for parliament and through you Mr Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Government Business can initiate that committee.” I think this committee on violence can look at the issues of violence against women and also all forms of violence that are in the country. I think, it will be a very good response and I strongly recommend.”

“.... offices like Life Line has done an excellent job. I believe the government should look at support such institutions and offices which (are) struggling by themselves”.

“There are lots of funds going to the Districts. I recommend to the Floor of Parliament through the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance that we look at establishing a Community Development Program for the district level, so that we have a dedicated fund like health, education, law and order, water and etc... Each of the 89 districts should establish a family support service, which is in each local level government area, any victim can come and we can call the councillor or the ward member, the pastor and other leaders at this centre and address the issue”.

Mr James Marabe, MP
(Tari)

“I would like also to put on record on behalf of my people the support on the petition that is on the Floor on the petition on Violence not only against women but against all forms”.