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**Side-event - Nordic ministers**

**06.03.2013**

*From prevention to response – Engaging men and boys in  
preventing and ending violence against women and girls.*

The cooperation between the Nordic countries is the oldest regional cooperation in the world.

I believe the greatest product we have developed is our welfare state. This is not only a question of having sufficient financial resources available. We became prosperous because we developed the welfare state.

The Nordic welfare states are based on a shared political goal of encouraging strong social cohesion. The Nordic social model is based on the core values of equal opportunities, social solidarity and security for all.

It is no coincidence that all the Nordic countries are always ranked among the top ten countries on international statistics when the level of gender equality is measured. This is due to our joint efforts. The levels of employment and flexibility in the Nordic labor market are high – as are the birth rates.

Because the Nordic welfare states largely have taken over traditional “woman tasks”, women have been able to enter the labor market and the political arena to a greater degree than in other parts of the world.

Here in the Nordic countries, we have set some standards we are proud of. However there are still challenges ahead. One of the most important and frightening of them all is the amount of gender based violence.

Gender based violence is the utmost consequence of the suppression of women.

Violence produces - and over generations - reproduces gender inequality. Recent research shows a negative correlation between the level of gender equality in a family and the level of violence. Domestic violence is more prevalent in families who base their everyday life in a traditional gender stereotypic way than in families who share their family responsibilities more equally. This correlation also applies in society as such.

The level of gender equality is increasing in the Nordic countries but the number of reported incidences of domestic violence does not decrease as one would expect. In Norway, there has been a sharp rise in the number of reported cases of domestic violence the last years.

However, I do believe that one of the reasons for this is that we, with the help from woman’s organizations, have succeeded in reducing the shame, taboos and privatization of this theme and encourage women to seek help.

Violence against women has become a public matter. The amount of reported domestic violence are frightening but it also means that women are speaking up and this is a wanted development!

The increase in the number of cases reported must also, in the view of the Norwegian authorities, be viewed in connection with the increased efforts of the police in combating domestic violence in recent years.

But we do have challenges. And in order to meet them, the Nordic countries may have some different approaches but we all focus on “the three Ps”: prevention, prosecution of the offender, and protection of and assistance to victims.

But the numbers speak for themselves – we still have challenges.

One major strategy both nationally but also globally should be the engagement and involvement of men.

When I speak about engaging men I have three levels of engagement in mind:

Firstly;

- men in international and national power positions must address violence against women as a human rights violation

Secondly;

- men must contribute in the fight to change traditional attitudes and stereotypes

And thirdly;

- we need strong and visible male role-models

Consider women's underrepresentation in formal politics, especially in its upper reaches. On an average global basis, less than one-fifth of all cabinet positions are held by women.

Cabinets dominated by elite men and ministers allocate time and resources to issues of their choosing, and women's physical safety does not have a high enough priority in many countries represented here today.

So when we speak about involving and engaging men, let us start with the top level. They are the ones who decide if there will be resources for investigation and prosecution. If there will be safe environments and surveillance, and if being born a girl child make us truly equal before the law.

But how come the challenges in the Nordic countries persist – countries with a high degree of equality and a solid legal system.

In my own country a recent survey showed that as many as 15 % of ....*vi må ha korrekte henvisninger til denne studien.*

We need to change attitudes. We can not have stereotypes that reproduce unwanted inequalities. And this also calls for men's engagement.

Traditional masculinities are commonly associated with a number of positive values and characteristics. There is however, reason to be critical of some behavioral features traditionally associated with masculinity.

During this spring the Norwegian Government will submit a White Paper on gender equality to the Parliament. Here, challenges and responses related to traditional attitudes and stereotypes will be addressed.

Promotion of positive and healthy attitudes must start early in every child's life. Kindergartens and schools are important arenas in children's life and the right place to start.

And we need strong and visible male role-models. The majority of men are *not* perpetrators.

Men generally care for the well-being of women, sisters, daughters, friends and their friend's girlfriends.

This Friday we celebrate the International Women's Day. At the same day the Government will submit a White Paper on domestic violence to the Parliament. Our choice of date is no co-incidence. We want the public's attention and we want to create further debate.

In Norway on March 8<sup>th</sup>, we will also celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of women`s right to vote.

Like in most other struggles for equality between women and men, women have been standing in the frontline in the fight against violence against women. The women`s organizations have been extremely important. And I would like to pay tribute to the civil society here today.

When politicians and civil society join forces – results are bound to come.

Thank you.