

**Speech by Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst, Head of the Delegation of the  
European Union**

**Launching of the White Ribbon Campaign 2012**

**Monday 26 November 2012**

*Check against delivery*

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

Allow me to start with an extract from the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton's declaration on behalf of the European Union, issued yesterday:

*Violence and abuse affect women from all kinds of backgrounds every day. As many as seven in ten women around the world, report having experienced physical violence at some point in their lifetime. The violence knows no geographical, cultural, social, economic or educational boundaries. It is a phenomenon that affects all societies and takes many gruesome forms: from sexual harassment to female genital mutilation, forced marriage to honour killings. Violence against women is arguably the most widespread human rights violation of our time. A violation that claims millions of victims every year and causes terrible physical and emotional pain.*

*We must not only help prevent violence; we must also work to provide women with access to economic opportunities, to ensure their equal participation in public life, repeal laws and practices that continue to discriminate against them and ensure that homes, offices, streets and schools are safe for women and girls.*

*The EU is committed to leading this work. We have made protection against gender-based violence a key feature of the EU's human rights strategy. And we have cleared the way for greater cooperation between the EU and the UN on this agenda.*

*The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls is the priority theme of the UN Commission on the Status of Women's 57th session, which will be held in March 2013. The EU will work to ensure the Commission's success.*

Thank you for inviting me to the launching of the White Ribbon Campaign, a campaign that is being kicked off during these days all around the globe. Lebanon now belongs to those countries which address gender-based violence from an important angle: inviting men and boys to work hand in hand with women and girls. We now have men addressing and –hopefully- influencing attitudes and behaviours of other men.

We now have men who can start within their families, circles of friends, in the public sphere to turn around violent behaviour.

All over the world, including Europe, there is still a long way to go to end gender-based violence. Legislation must be adapted, social and economic practices changed, cultural habits and clichés of masculinity overcome. In Lebanon, one important starter to seriously address violence against women is still lacking: a clear demonstration of political commitment by the Lebanese government, backed by concrete actions by the government, by civil society organisations, by the country at large. Whilst thankfully civil society is very engaged – and as such also actively supported by the European Union and other international partners – the Executive and the Legislative have some way to go. A long awaited law on domestic violence has still not been approved by Parliament and the reasons given for the prolonged debate are not reassuring, to the contrary.

Today, I encourage and invite all men and women, boys and girls, everywhere in the country to take a stand against violence and wear the white ribbon for the coming sixteen days to demonstrate our joint *"personal pledge to not commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls, anywhere at any time."*

Thank you.