**UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women - Call for Submissions to All Stakeholders On Gap in Incorporating & Implementing International & Regional Standards on Violence Against Women**

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Dubravka Šimonović took up function as Special Rapporteur on 1 August 2015 and intends to, *inter alia,* focus on the legal and policy frameworks of her mandate and the international human rights mechanisms to discuss the gap in incorporating and implementing the international and regional standards related to violence against women.

The Special Rapporteur considers that the discussion on the adequacy of the international legal framework on violence against women initiated by the former mandate holder should continue and she wishes to secure views from different stakeholders, including States, National Human Rights Institutions, Non-governmental organizations, as well as members of academia.

Taking into consideration the important role that different stakeholders play in reinforcing universal human rights standards, **she would be very interested to receive input and views on the following questions:**

1.    Do you consider that there is a need for a separate legally binding treaty on violence against women with its separate monitoring body?

A: Given the global persistence of violence against women and the fact that in many countries forms of violence are considered part of ‘tradition’, ‘culture’ or social problems (as opposed to legal problems) - and thus accepted/neglected, this issue urgently needs separate attention at the international level. Violence against women has transcended what we ‘normally’ consider acts of VAW. As human rights violations such as torture and enforced disappearances occur, female family members of the victims face mental, physical and economic violence as a result. These issues need to be taken into consideration as well and focused on.

2.    Do you consider that there is an incorporation gap of the international or regional human rights norms and standards?

A. The UNCEDAW does not focus directly on the issues of VAW. It mainly lays sets the stage and scenario in which VAW might occur or where VAW may be the end result.

3.    Do you believe that there is a lack of implementation of the international and regional legislation into the domestic law?

A. Yes. I am from Bangladesh where there is serious lack of implementation of all the criminal laws, including those on VAW. We have several laws dealing with VAW issues, including a Domestic Violence (Prevention) Act 2010 and a Women and Children Prevention of Repression Act 2003. Despite this negative social norms, economic crisis, corruption and neglect prevail – especially in the matter of domestic violence and rape. Bangladesh is a party to CEDAW but has come under constant criticism from the Committee due to its lack of improvement. Furthermore, Bangladesh is yet to lift its reservation from Article 2. International Conventions and Treaties do not automatically become part of domestic legislation in Bangladesh. It is an issue to be voted by Parliament. This has never happened.

4.    Do you think that there is a fragmentation of policies and legislation to address gender-based violence?

A. In Bangladesh the main problem lies in corruption and impunity. We have too many laws and several conflicting ones on VAW issues.

5.    Could you also provide your views on measures needed to address this normative and implementation gap and to accelerate prevention and elimination of violence against women?

A. Bangladesh has been elected thrice to the Human Rights Council. It needs to be made more accountable and pressurized into showing real progress in combating VAW – other than enacting laws (that are not implemented correctly). All that is mentioned by the government at the international level, is ‘free education for the girl child’. What is not discussed or mentioned is the alarming rise in crimes such as sexual harassment, rape, child marriages and low prosecution rates. Nor is domestic violence discussed. There are no functioning government-run crisis centers or counselors for victims of violence in police stations. No place for a victim of domestic violence to run to immediately to seek shelter. Worse still is the fact that there are instances of sexual harassment and rape perpetrated by the police too. Crimes against women and violence against women are not topics dealt with by Bangladesh in the international forum. This is only done by the NGOs.