



MEDIA RELEASE

Minnesota Advocates launches “Stop Violence Against Women” website

Minneapolis, MN (November 25, 2003): Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights officially launched the Stop Violence Against Women website, a resource for individuals and organizations working to eliminate violence against women in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The announcement came on the **International Day Against Violence Against Women**, as the first day of the global **“16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence”** campaign. The launch was held at the Budapest offices of the Network Women’s Program of the Open Society Institute (OSI). Attending the launch were Cheryl Thomas, the Director of the Women’s Human Rights Program at Minnesota Advocates; Osnat Lubrani, the Regional Programme Director of UNIFEM; Éva Földvári, Senior Program Manager at OSI; and representatives of regional non-governmental organizations.

The website, located at www.stopvaw.org, was designed in Minnesota by the Women’s Human Rights Program at Minnesota Advocates with the support of UNIFEM, OSI, Urban Planet, the University of Minnesota Human Rights Center, and many volunteers.

The website’s resources address domestic violence, trafficking in women, sexual assault and sexual harassment, and include training modules and online reference materials. The website also provides an opportunity for women’s rights activists in the CEE/CIS region to form partnerships and mentoring relationships through the message board included on the website’s “country pages”. These pages summarize developments related to efforts to **combat violence against women** in each of the countries of the CEE/CIS region.

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Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights works locally, nationally and internationally to protect universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. The organization has represented thousands of asylum seekers; worked in America and abroad to expand and protect the rights of women and children, and continues to coordinate human rights curricula with schools throughout the country.

The Network Women's Program of the Open Society Institute promotes the advancement of women's human rights, gender equality, and empowerment as an integral part of the process of democratization. The Program seeks to raise public awareness of gender issues, influence policy makers to develop gender sensitive policies and eradicate violations of women's rights.