



## EVENT REPORT

### *Ending the Atrocity Stop Rape Now: UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict*

*Featuring:*

**The Honorable Margot Wallström**

Vice-President of the European Commission (2004-present)  
Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders' Ministerial Initiative

**Ambassador Melanne Vermeer**

United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, US Department of State (2009–present)  
Co-Founder, Chair, and Co-CEO of Vital Voices Global Partnership (2000–2009)

*Facilitated by:*

**Ms. Inés Alberdi**

Executive Director, UNIFEM (June 2008 – present)

**Wednesday, July 8, 2009  
8:30am – 9:30am**

**The Aspen Institute  
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 700  
Washington, D.C. 20036**



**Table of Contents**

Executive Summary ..... 3

Issue Background..... 4

Summary of Welcoming Remarks by Patricia Deyton ..... 6

Summary of Remarks by UNIFEM Executive Director Inés Alberdi ..... 7

Summary of Remarks by US Ambassador-at-Large Melanne Verwee ..... 8

Summary of Remarks by Vice President Margot Wallström..... 9

Summary of Question and Answer Session..... 10

Appendix A: Participant Biographies ..... 12

Appendix B: Registered Attendees ..... 14

Appendix C: Full Remarks by Ms. Alberdi ..... 19

Appendix D: Full Remarks by Vice President Wallström ..... 22

Appendix E: Invitation..... 24

## Executive Summary

On Wednesday, July 8, 2009, at the Aspen Institute's headquarters in Washington, D.C., the Council of Women World Leaders ("the Council") hosted a discussion with the Honorable Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the European Commission and Chair of the Council's Ministerial Initiative, Ambassador Melanne Verwee, the United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, and Ms. Inés Alberdi, Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), entitled *Ending the Atrocity, Stop Rape Now: UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict*.

Introductory remarks were made by Patricia Deyton, Senior Advisor to the Council. The discussion was part of the Council's ongoing *Madeleine K. Albright Women's Voices at the Aspen Institute Series*, an Aspen Institute Public Program, and was attended by more than 100 guests from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), representatives of governments dealing with widespread sexual violence, academics, members of the media, representatives of civil society, and other international organizations.

Ms. Alberdi's opening remarks provided an overview of the issue of sexual violence in conflict and the actions UNIFEM has taken to address this issue. She spoke about sexual violence in conflict as "history's greatest silence" and how a desire to end this silence led to the creation of the UN Action campaign. She discussed UN Security Council Resolutions (SCRs) 1325 and 1820, both of which address and have implications for sexual violence in conflict. SCR 1325 acknowledges that war affects men and women differently, and that women have an important role in peace building. SCR 1820 states that sexual violence is a crime of concern to the international community and a security issue that demands a security response. Ms. Alberdi described UNIFEM's progress on combating the use of sexual violence in conflict through programs in concert with women's organizations, parliamentarians, and governments. The programs address key issues of combating impunity, ending victims' silence, ensuring women's full and equal participation in peace processes, and services for survivors.

Ambassador Verwee spoke about her newly created position in the US State Department and her role in the struggle to eradicate sexual violence as a tool of conflict. She referred to the issue as "nothing less than a global scourge." She felt that tackling violence against women must be dealt with through economic empowerment, legal reform, education, and healthcare. The underlying problem she identified is gender inequality and the de-humanization of women. She described the current situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as an atrocity different from anything else we have experienced. Finally, Ambassador Verwee called for a move from words to action on this issue.

Vice President Wallström provided the participants with her thoughts on sexual violence against women. According to her, there are six major steps that need to be taken to combat sexual violence in conflict: 1) we must make SCR 1820 more specific; 2) we must remind justice systems that impunity and forgiveness cannot erase crimes committed against women; 3) we must continue to raise awareness; 4) we must work to increase technical capacity to tackle the issue; 5) must ensure that programs have the resources they need to carry out their work; and 6) a UN mechanism must be created to coordinate these needs.

Following the speakers' remarks and questions from Ms. Alberdi, the audience had an opportunity to participate in a Q&A session with Vice President Wallström and Ambassador Verwee, which was moderated by Ms. Alberdi.

## Issue Background

Sexual violence, including violence in conflict, is a serious, present-day atrocity affecting millions of people. Women and girls, who are the main targets for sexual violence, continue to live lives fraught with physical and economic insecurity. Sexual violence is frequently a conscious military tactic employed by armed groups to terrify opponents, demoralize individuals, and destroy families, communities, and societies. These assaults, aptly described by Hilde F. Johnson, UNICEF Deputy Executive Director, as being “cheaper than bullets and more silent than bombs,” take many forms, including sexual slavery, kidnapping, forced recruitment, forced prostitution, and most commonly, rape. Sexual violence during conflict remains vastly under-addressed due to weak national mechanisms for the protection of women and inadequate health and social support services. Many still view sexual violence as an inevitable, if regrettable, consequence of conflict and displacement.

Rape in conflict is nothing less than a war crime and a violation of human rights and humanitarian law. Council member Rt. Honorable Helen Clark, recently appointed as United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Administrator, has stressed the importance of supporting UNSCR 1820 which states unequivocally that “rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, or a constitutive act with respect to genocide.” Although a range of governmental, non-governmental, and international initiatives to address sexual violence are being implemented, the scale and complexity of the problem have caused significant gaps in the response. Stop Rape Now: United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action) was created to address these gaps.

UN Action unites the work of 12 UN entities\* with the goal of preventing and addressing conflict-related acts of sexual violence. UN Action builds upon existing coordination structures, drawing in partners that work on security, peacekeeping and development issues. It harnesses the comparative strengths of each UN entity to ensure a broad-based, multi-sectoral response – ensuring civilians are protected from rape, survivors receive the services they need to rebuild their lives, and perpetrators are brought to justice. UN Action embodies the UN system’s response to Security Council Resolution 1820, which welcomes this collective effort to create awareness about sexual violence in armed conflicts and post-conflict situations, with the ultimate goal of bringing it to an end.

UN Action is helping to make security and humanitarian interventions more sustainable by supporting women’s engagement in conflict prevention and recovery; working with men and boys; aligning the UN’s work more effectively behind national and local efforts; deepening partnerships with the array of civil society actors engaged in sexual violence programming; and ensuring early-warning systems are informed by increases in sexual violence. UN Action has, to date, provided strategic support to Liberia, Kenya, Sudan (Darfur) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the first-ever *Comprehensive Strategy to Combat Sexual Violence* was developed.

\* Partnering UN entities:

- DPA: Department of Political Affairs
- DPKO: Peacekeeping Best Practices
- OCHA: Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- OHCHR: United Nations Human Rights
- UNAIDS: UN Programme on HIV/AIDS
- UNDP: UN Development Programme
- UNFPA: United Nations Populations Fund
- UNHCR: UN High Commissioner for Refugees
- UNICEF: United Nations Children Fund
- UNIFEM: UN Development Fund for Women
- WFP: World Food Programme
- WHO: World Health Organization

**About UNIFEM's work against gender-based violence:**

The fight against gender-based violence is a major priority for UNIFEM, which works on several fronts to stop the cycle of violence against women and to address the source of the problem: gender inequality. UNIFEM multiplies the power of its groundbreaking strategies through advocacy campaigns and close partnerships with governments, women's groups, and other branches of the UN system. In a number of countries, UNIFEM works with its partners to establish legal frameworks to combat violence. Laws alone, however comprehensive they may be, must be followed by plans for specific national actions. UNIFEM is active on this end as well.

UNIFEM has been at the forefront of supporting the collection of data and research on violence against women. This information is crucial for understanding the scope of the problem and devising the means to stop it. Strategies to stop violence before it erupts are essential, but lack resources and visibility. UNIFEM supports prevention initiatives from the local to the international level, including in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Housed within UNIFEM, the Trust Fund offers grants to innovative projects to prevent violence. Projects are run at the community, national and regional levels. With relatively modest sums, grantees have successfully supported the passage of new laws, trained police, and involved men and boys in stopping violence. The Trust Fund also collects and shares information about effective strategies that can be replicated or implemented on a larger scale.

## Speakers' Remarks

### **Summary of welcoming remarks from Patricia Deyton:**

The event began with welcoming remarks by Patricia Deyton, Senior Advisor to the Council. She welcomed Vice President Wallström, Ambassador Verveer, Executive Director Alberdi and other distinguished guests. She extended regrets on behalf of Laura Liswood, the Council's Secretary General, who was unable to attend the event due to other business obligations.

Ms. Deyton acknowledged the Delegation of the European Commission to the United States, specifically Kasper Zeuthen and his team; the office of Ms. Alberdi, especially Joan Libby-Hawk; and the office of Ambassador Verveer for their work with the Council in planning the event.

For those attending a Council event for the first time, Ms. Deyton provided an overview of the Council's work, noting that the Council is a policy program of the Aspen Institute and is a network of current and former women presidents and prime ministers. She gave a brief history of the Council and explained that the day's event was part of the *Madeleine K. Albright Women's Voices at the Aspen Institute Series*, a series of high-level symposiums providing women leaders with a platform to discuss, debate, and bring awareness to issues of critical importance to women and the world.

Ms. Deyton mentioned the upcoming fall event featuring the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report. This event and others are made possible with the support of Council friends. Council staff members were on hand to answer any inquiries about program sponsorship.

Ms. Deyton introduced the topic as a modern-day atrocity affecting millions of people. She noted that women and girls, who are the main targets for sexual violence, continue to live lives fraught with physical and economic insecurity. Sexual violence is frequently a conscious military tactic employed by armed groups to terrify opponents, demoralize individuals, and destroy families, communities, and societies. Although a range of governmental, non-governmental, and international initiatives to address sexual violence are being implemented, the scale and complexity of the problem has caused significant gaps in the response. *Stop Rape Now: United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict*, or, simply, "UN Action," was created to address these gaps.

Ms. Deyton described the format of the event, explaining that we would first hear remarks from UNIFEM Executive Director Inés Alberdi followed by Vice President Wallström and Ambassador Verveer. Ms. Alberdi would then lead a discussion examining the possible collaborative efforts between the US, the European Union, and the UN Action campaign. The discussion would later be opened to questions from the audience.

Ms. Deyton introduced Vice President Wallström, Ambassador Verveer and Ms. Alberdi, describing their numerous accomplishments to date. She invited Ms. Alberdi to give remarks on UN Action and the role of UNIFEM in the campaign.

### **Summary of remarks by Inés Alberdi, UNIFEM Executive Director:**

Ms. Alberdi began by thanking the organizers of the event for the opportunity to facilitate discussion on a subject she calls “history’s greatest silence”—sexual violence in conflict. She noted that the event was an important forum for sharing ideas on collaboration with the UN Action network, of which UNIFEM is a founding member. UN Action was created in 2007 to unite 12 UN entities behind a single goal: to end sexual violence during and after war.

Ms. Alberdi told the story of Furah—the woman pictured on the Stop Rape Now poster—who walks 16 kilometers a day across rebel-held territory carrying her 18-month-old daughter to sell wood in eastern Congo -- “the rape capital of the world.” Furah is an illustration of how sexual violence targets women, not just for their vulnerability, but for their strength as they continue to support their children and families, even in the midst of war. Ms. Alberdi explained that women in crisis situations are often all that holds families and communities together, and when women are attacked, the structures that ensure human security fracture, leaving space for those who would destroy the peace process.

Ms. Alberdi mentioned recent United Nations Security Council actions which have begun to change the public’s and the international community’s perceptions of rape in conflict. Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 require that peace agreements take women’s needs and interests into account. SCR 1325 recognizes that war affects men and women differently, and that women have an important role in peace-building processes. SCR 1820 states that sexual violence is a crime of concern to the international community and a security issue that demands a security response. The real challenge, she reminded us, lies in translating these resolutions into progress at the level of displacement camps in Darfur, the hinterlands of Nepal, or the streets of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Ms. Alberdi discussed the work UNIFEM has conducted in conflict areas since early 1990. The organization has taken the lead on raising awareness of the issue through specific actions: UNIFEM has sounded the alarm on how the stigma and terror caused by rape impedes women’s political, economic, and social participation; UNIFEM has issued first-hand testimonies of the impact of war on women in the 2002 report, *Women, War and Peace*; the organization has also implemented programs in concert with women’s organizations, parliamentarians, and governments to address key issues.

The key issues highlighted by Ms. Alberdi included combating impunity, ending victims’ silence, ensuring women’s full and equal participation in peace processes, and funding services for survivors. She emphasized the importance of prosecuting perpetrators of sexual violence, using the media as a tool to spread the word about the issue, involving women in peace talks, and providing a holistic response to victims.

UNIFEM continues to provide strategic support at the country level and to advocate for change at the international level. The organization is working to build a knowledge hub on sexual violence containing information on good practices and guidance for envoys, mediators, and peacekeepers on implementing Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on the ground.

In conclusion, Ms. Alberdi stated that the actions outlined in her presentation are promising first steps, but challenges remain. Just recently, the UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo acknowledged that sexual violence is “dramatically on the increase.” She urged all participants to meet these challenges in their different capacities.

## **Summary of remarks by Melanne Verveer, United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues:**

Ambassador Verveer began her remarks by acknowledging the speakers and the audience, who, she noted, consisted of many individuals already working extensively on this issue.

This event marked the Ambassador's first time at the Aspen Institute since accepting her new role in the Obama administration. The United States Ambassador-at-Large position was created by the Obama administration and reports directly to the US Secretary of State on issues affecting women worldwide. Her appointment and the creation of the position demonstrate the importance women hold in eyes of the Obama administration. President Obama and Secretary Clinton recognize the importance of women in US foreign policy and want to create programs to protect women and create legal reforms. Today's issues cannot be resolved without the inclusion of women, and the new leadership of the State Department recalls the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 and the famous "women's rights are human rights" speech.

Ambassador Verveer stated that the United States must address sexual violence, which is nothing less than a global scourge. The State Department is currently working to combat rape as a weapon of war. Despite positive changes, further reform is needed to correct laws and programs because no country can get ahead if half of its population is left behind. Democracy cannot be fully obtained without the participation of women. These changes require a multi-sectoral approach, and tackling violence against women must be a priority through economic empowerment, legal reform, education, and healthcare. The issue must be approached through the underlying problems of gender inequality and the dehumanization of women.

Ambassador Verveer expressed her belief that rape is a tool of war. She views the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is an "atrocious different from anything else that has happened before," for several reasons. First is the unprecedented savagery of the rape: perpetrators use physical mutilation and leave a life-long visible mark – a permanent "badge of dishonor" that causes the women to be cast out of their families and villages. Also, the situation has continued unabated in DRC for twelve years – and it has been a silent crisis. Approximately 1,100 rapes occur each month – 36 women and children every day. HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases are on the rise, but still a lack of political will hinders progress.

Ambassador Verveer was quick to acknowledge that civilian groups are providing help – primarily NGOs and doctors/clinics. Meanwhile, armed groups continue to use rape as an effective tool of war. The UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC has a mandate to protect civilians, but more needs to be done. There are not enough legal systems in place to hold perpetrators accountable. She agreed with Ms. Alberdi's point that rape is more likely to lead to corridors of power than to the cells of a prison.

Ambassador Verveer felt that SCRs 1820 and 1325 are a good start, but that they are not tangible enough. SCR 1325 has been in place for 10 years with little results, and SCR 1820 is in need of better enforcement. Neither resolution has produced many tangible results. She feels strongly that conflict must end before sexual violence can be brought to an end. Since international efforts to address violence are often hindered by political will, key leadership is absolutely necessary in this situation. The US State Department is making efforts to protect all women. US Senator Barbara Boxer has recently been appointed to tackle women's issues within the Obama Administration. She stated in closing that we need to move from words to action.

## **Summary of remarks by Margot Wallström, European Commission Vice President:**

Vice President Wallström began her remarks by telling the story of Lumo Sinai, who is 21 years old. A year ago, Lumo was rendered incontinent and possibly unable to bear children due to a violent gang rape in Eastern Congo. A year ago, she was dismissed by her fiancé, rejected by her family, and left waiting for reconstructive surgery that would likely never come. The Vice President stated that she was glad to be present at the event, for Lumo.

The Vice President observed that June of this year marked the one-year anniversary of SCR1820, and that next year will be the 10-year anniversary of SCR 1325. She stated that these tools need to be better implemented, and that we need to go a step further and use them more ambitiously. The two resolutions have set forth a strong message, but it is time to go from words to deeds. She then outlined six ways in which we can move forward:

First, SCR 1820 needs to be made more specific. Building on the United Nations Secretary General's recent report, we must publicly mount a campaign to improve SCR 1820's, potentially on the heels of the success enjoyed by the resolution 'Children in Armed Conflict.'

Second, we must remind justice systems that impunity and forgiveness cannot erase war crimes committed against women. When it comes to sexual violence, forgiveness is not an option. She described the procedure in Uganda, where in order to file a rape allegation in court, a person must get a form from the police and have it signed by a medical officer. Many families are forced to bribe the police just to get the form, then bribe the medical officer to sign the form—after which, the police often ask for a fee from the perpetrator in order to make the form "disappear."

Next, the Vice President feels that we must continue to raise awareness. We must make sexual violence in conflict everyone's issue. Discussing the topic is disturbing, but we must. She encouraged those present to figure out how each of us can talk about the issue, whether it's by writing a blog entry for friends, sending a letter to an elected official, forwarding an article to a local newspaper, or tweeting a statistic for our followers.

She expressed the need to further build technical capacity to tackle the issue. She advised working from the ground up to ensure that the data and measures we are using are as accurate as possible. Groups like the Sexual Violence Research Initiative and others should be utilized to ensure a common set of data and indicators and to create a concrete foundation on which to build proposals.

It is also important to ensure that programs have the resources they need to be true partners. The Vice President noted that NGOs and civil society programs must have the funding they need to transmit a cultural message that rape is not an acceptable norm, and that there is help for survivors to come forward.

Finally, in light of the anniversaries of the Security Council Resolutions, the Vice President proposed the creation of a UN mechanism to coordinate action needed to tackle the issue. She advocated for classifying rape as an illegal weapon of warfare. She concluded by encouraging the establishment of a World Commission for Ending Sexual Violence Against Women in Armed Conflict to address key issues including ending impunity in justice systems, building effective implementation mechanisms, and working with victims.

## **Summary of Remarks During the Question and Answer Session**

Ms. Alberdi began the question and answer section by asking Ambassador Verveer about her new position in the US State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues. Ambassador Verveer explained that in her new position she will address sexual violence in conflict inevitably given that it is impossible to address violence against women without addressing women's issues overall. She felt that we must prevent violence by empowering women generally. We must address the underlying factors, but also be specific in measures. It requires a systematic review of the political discussions and added impetus of discussions between parties – a diplomatic approach. Services to victims need to be strengthened, perhaps with the help of women in police units. We need better mechanisms of protection and immediate health needs should be addressed. She called for increased collaboration with the UN to find ways to address the issue and for more thorough follow through.

Ms. Alberdi directed her next question to Vice President Wallström. She inquired about the Vice President's views on civil society's ability to change the issue at hand. Vice President Wallström responded that it is women's organizations and NGOs who give voice to women affected by sexual violence. They create a place for women around the table, and they must continue to do so. Organizations also offer concrete services, making the role of civil society extremely important.

Ms. Alberdi opened the discussion to questions from the audience. One attendee inquired about the speakers' media strategies and thoughts regarding the use of media to spread the word about this issue. Ambassador Verveer discussed the importance of the use of radio and television by NGOs to inform women about what they can do. She felt that specific communication needs within different communities should be addressed, especially those where technical skills and infrastructure are lacking.

Vice President Wallström discussed the comments she received on her blog surrounding sexual violence in conflict. She again acknowledged that the message is very uncomfortable, particularly to men, but everyone needs to understand the importance of the issue. She hoped that if more men can speak about and represent the issue, it would help spread the message. She called reiterated the need for a world commission to provide services to victims and to “name and shame” those not engaging in finding a solution.

Ambassador Verveer commented that New York Times writer Nicholas Kristof has written numerous articles on the subject and also received negative comments from people wanting to know why he continues to cover the topic. She did not share the belief that there is too much coverage of the topic.

Ms. Alberdi mentioned the “say no to violence against women” petition, which received five million signatures in one year, and was presented to the UN. Over 60 heads of state and ministers signed the petition, which can be seen on UNIFEM's website.

Patricia Ellis of the Women's Foreign Policy Group asked how we can get men involved in this campaign. Ambassador Verveer mentioned actor Ben Affleck's work in the Congo as an example of men getting involved, though more prominent global male leaders are needed. Vice President Wallström stated that UN Security Council resolutions need to be more concrete.

Alyse Nelson Bloom of Vital Voices Global Partnership asked about the lack of political will. She hoped to find a way to create an economic link to show politicians and businessmen that solving this issue is in their interest. Ambassador Verveer discussed her experience in the 1990s, when Congress was trying to pass the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Despite women's aggressive lobbying it took years to pass this piece of legislation. Two key groups – police and the business community – were instrumental

in lobbying for passage of VAWA. Police described the aspects of criminality, the repeat-offenders, the connections to other crimes, etc. The business community provided proof that violence against women was detracting from America's productivity and hurting the economy. Violence against women was put into economic terms that made sense to business people, and this helped to change awareness of the issue.

Vice President Wallström felt that it was unfortunate that the issue had to be placed into economic and security terms in order to be recognized. She sees violence against women as a simple human rights issue. She wondered why an economic price tag had to be attached to women's rights in order for it to be legislated.

Carol Jenkins of the International Women's Media Foundation worked in Liberia, and witnessed the power of media. She emphasized that the media should be used to bring attention to the issue, but wondered how to go about it and where funding would come from. Vice President Wallström responded that programs currently in place should be leveraged. The EU has some programs, but more are needed. Increased funds need to be secured from the EU, the US, and the UN.

Jehan Mechak Deng from the Government of South Sudan Mission to the United States noted that Sudan has no means of communication (like radio or TV). She wanted to discuss additional tools for improving the situation on the ground. Ambassador Verveer acknowledged the critical need for help, and Vice President Wallström stated that communication is crucial. She hoped to use innovative ways to raise awareness of these issues and give victims the opportunity to speak up. Ms. Alberdi suggested engaging women's groups in the region. In work with the UN, it is important to make sure that women are involved in visits, programs, and negotiations.

Susannah Sirkin of Physicians for Human Rights mentioned that mental health consequences from sexual violence are important to note. Physicians for Human Rights has seen a lot of evidence supporting this in their research; the majority of women who have been raped suffer from depression. There is minimal response on the ground to this problem. Women demand impunity, but nothing is done. She felt that a shame list should exist for countries that show impunity. Women at one refugee site produced a manifesto calling for equality which can be viewed on the PHR website. Ambassador Verveer and Vice President Wallström both acknowledged the work undertaken by Physicians for Human Rights.

Michael Wasco of the Institute for Inclusive Security inquired about the current status of national action plans implementing SCRs 1325 and 1820. Vice President Wallström indicated that only seven of 27 EU member countries have national action plans. Ambassador Verveer stated that the US is exploring this topic at the moment. The emphasis in the US is on engaging women in the creation of an action plan, without making the action plan an end in itself.

Ms. Alberdi closed the discussion by acknowledging the importance of continued discussion and of engaging women in the early stages of peace process.

## **Participant Biographies**

### **Patricia H. Deyton, Senior Advisor, Council of Women World Leaders**

Ms. Deyton is the Senior Advisor to the Council of Women World Leaders and the Director of the Center for Gender in Organizations (CGO), the internationally recognized research arm of the Simmons School of Management in Boston. At Simmons, Ms. Deyton is also a Senior Lecturer in both the MBA and Undergraduate Programs. In addition she teaches at the Harvard University Extension School and at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) at Simmons. She is an advisor and lecturer in the PhD program GSLIS where she is lead faculty for the capstone course in Leadership and Change.

Prior to joining Simmons in the summer of 2004, Ms. Deyton was the Executive Director of the Council of Women World Leaders based at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, where she had responsibility for the oversight of the strategy, program development and implementation, operations and funding of the Council. Since the Council's move to Washington, D.C. in 2004, Ms. Deyton continues her role with the Council as Senior Advisor. She has over 30 years of experience at the highest executive levels in the nonprofit sector, including 11 years as the CEO of the American Red Cross of Massachusetts Bay.

Ms. Deyton currently serves on the Board of Trustees of the Longy School of Music, the Board of Directors of the United Methodist Foundation of New England and the Council of Women World Leaders. She is an active member of The Boston Club.

### **Inés Alberdi, Executive Director, UNIFEM**

Ms. Alberdi of Spain has been the Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) since 4 June 2008.

Ms. Alberdi has worked for more than 25 years on gender issues and in politics. She comes to UNIFEM from her previous position as Professor of Sociology at Madrid University, where she had taught Political Sociology and Sociology of Gender since 1993. Prior to that, she was Director for Research at the Centre for Sociological Research (1993 – 1993). Ms. Alberdi has published extensively on family and women's issues. Her distinguished academic career also included positions as Associate Researcher at George Washington University, Washington, DC (1988 – 1989), and Visiting Scholar in the Department of Sociology at Georgetown University, Washington, DC (1978 – 1979), as well as an Eisenhower Fellowship (1998).

From 2003 to 2007, Inés Alberdi was an elected Deputy in the Madrid Assembly. She served as an expert for the Equal Opportunities Unit of the European Commission on the networks Family and Work and Diversification of Occupational Choices for Women (1998–2000) and worked for the Inter-American Bank as Adviser for Women in Development (1989–1990). She also served as a Member of the Board of INSTRAW, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (1986–1989).

### **Margot Wallström, Vice President, European Commission; Chair, Council Ministerial Initiative**

Vice President Wallström has served as Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Communication Strategy and Institutional Relations since 2004 and as Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders Ministerial Initiative since 2007.

Vice President Wallström was elected to the Swedish Parliament at age twenty-five and later became Minister for Consumer Affairs, Women and Youth, Minister for Culture, and Minister for Social Affairs. She served as EU Environment Commissioner from 1999 to 2004 and played a significant role in ensuring that the Kyoto Protocol saw the light of day. In 2005, she became the first member of the European Commission to have her own blog. In 2006, she was voted the most popular woman in Sweden, ahead of members of the royal family, Olympic gold medal-winning athletes, and famous sport and entertainment stars. In 2007 she launched EUtube, the Commission's own channel on YouTube. The site has been a phenomenal success with close to 13 million videos viewed since the launch.

In 2008, Vice President Wallström received the Göteborg Award on Sustainable Development and the H.M. The King's Medal of the 12<sup>th</sup> Seraphim Order. She has served as Co-chair of the Road to Copenhagen initiative since 2007 with Mary Robinson and Gro Harlem Brundtland. Since 2000, she has also served as Chair of Respect Table, a business-led group focusing on sustainable development. She has published the books *EU – elite project? No! The People's Europe* and *The People's Europe or Why is it so hard to love the EU?* (both with MEP Göran Färm). She also wrote the foreword to the Swedish translation of Al Gore's book *An Inconvenient Truth* in 2007.

### **Melanne Verveer, Ambassador-at-Large, Global Women's Issues, US Department of State**

Ambassador Verveer is the current United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues. In her capacity as director of the Department of State's new office on Global Women's Issues, Ambassador Verveer coordinates foreign policy issues and activities relating to the political, economic and social advancement of women around the world. She mobilizes concrete support for women's rights and political and economic empowerment through initiatives and programs designed to increase women's and girls' access to education and health care, to combat violence against women and girls in all its forms, and to ensure that women's rights are fully integrated with human rights in the development of U.S. foreign policy.

Ambassador Verveer most recently served as Chair and Co-CEO of Vital Voices Global Partnership, an international nonprofit she co-founded. Prior to her work with Vital Voices, Ambassador Verveer served as Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff to the First Lady in the Clinton Administration and was chief assistant to then-First Lady Hillary Clinton in all her wide-ranging international activities to advance women's rights and further social development, democracy and peace-building initiatives. She also led the effort to establish the President's Interagency Council on Women. Prior to her time in the White House, Ambassador Verveer served in a number of leadership roles in public policy organizations and as legislative staff.

Ambassador Verveer has a B.A. and M.A. from Georgetown University. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, Women's Foreign Policy Group, and numerous other organizations.

## Registered Attendees

### Speakers

*Inés Alberdi*  
Executive Director  
UNIFEM

*Patricia Deyton*  
Senior Advisor  
Council of Women World Leaders

Melanne Verveer  
Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's  
Issues  
United States Department of State

*Margot Wallström*  
Vice President  
European Commission

### Participants

*May Al-Barzinji*  
Program Development  
Refugees International

*Sarah Albert*  
Social Policy and Advocacy Director  
YWCA

*Lamiss Al-Tashi*  
Assistant Media and Public Affairs Officer  
Embassy of the Republic of Yemen

*Letitia Anderson*  
Advocacy and Women's Rights Specialist  
UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict

*Kerri Anderson*  
Program Officer  
International Republican Institute

*Martin Apple*  
President  
Council of Scientific Society Presidents

*Alex Arriaga*  
Consultant  
Women Thrive Worldwide

*Kathleen Barnett*  
Senior Vice President  
International Center for Research on Women

*Sigrid Bay*  
First Secretary  
Royal Norwegian Embassy

*Anne Bergenfelt*  
Adviser to Vice President Wallström  
European Commission

*Katherine Blakeslee*  
Director  
Office of Women and Development  
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**Council of Women World Leaders  
“UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict” Programme  
July 8, 2009, The Aspen Institute, Washington, D.C.**

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**Speech by Inés Alberdi, UNIFEM Executive Director**

*Ending History’s Greatest Silence*

I would like to thank the organizers of this event for the opportunity to facilitate discussion on a subject called “history’s greatest *silence*”—sexual violence in conflict. This is also an important forum for sharing ideas on collaboration with the UN Action network, of which UNIFEM is a founding member. UN Action was created in 2007 to unite 12 UN entities behind a single goal: to end sexual violence during and after war.

Most of us experience war indirectly—through often shocking images and statistics. Yet it is the everyday stories that speak most powerfully about the reality of war for women who live it. Stories like that of Furah—pictured on the Stop Rape poster—who walks 16 kilometers a day across rebel-held territory carrying her 18-month-old daughter to sell wood in eastern Congo-- “the rape capital of the world”. She illustrates how sexual violence targets women, not just for their *vulnerability*, but for their *strength* as they continue to support their children and families, even in the midst of war.

Women in crisis situations are often all that holds families and communities together. When women are attacked, the structures that ensure human security fracture, leaving space for those who would destroy the peace process. In this way, sexual violence can spark the flames of conflict that the UN Security Council and peacekeeping missions seek to extinguish.

Matters of war and peace are measured in terms of bombs and bullets, rather than whether women can get to market without being robbed or raped. But recent Security Council action has begun to change how the public and international community think about rape in conflict, recognizing it as a critical security challenge. This gives us a clear platform for action, one we can use to empower war-affected women to become agents of change.

In this regard, Security Council resolution 1820 builds upon its predecessor, resolution 1325, to emphasize that there can be *no security without women’s security*. There can be *no peace* unless women and girls have *peace of mind* when working in the fields or going to school. These resolutions require that peace agreements take women’s needs and interests into account from day one. It is at the moment of negotiating a peace deal, signing a ceasefire, sending peacekeepers on patrol, or training troops that these resolutions begin to live and have impact.

The importance of resolutions also lies in what they recognize and legitimize. In the case of 1325, that war affects men and women differently, and that women have an important role in peace building. In the case of 1820, that sexual violence is a crime of concern to the international community and a security issue that demands a security response. But the real challenge is translating this into progress at the level of a displacement camp in Darfur, the hinterlands of Nepal or the streets of Iraq or Afghanistan. The first-ever Secretary-General’s report on sexual violence, mandated by resolution 1820, sets out a plan for implementing the resolution and improving data-collection. The Council is also considering expanding its “naming and shaming” list on children and armed conflict to include those accused of “rape and other

grave sexual abuse”. It should be urged to do so, and to ensure the information is acted on by Sanctions Committees.

UNIFEM has been working in conflict areas since early 1990; during which time we’ve learned a lot about what works. We’ve consistently sounded the alarm about how the stigma and terror caused by rape impedes women’s political, economic and social participation. We issued first-hand testimonies of the impact of war on women in the 2002 report, *Women, War and Peace*. We have implemented several small programmes in concert with women’s organizations, parliamentarians and governments to address four key issues:

**First, combating impunity.** Changing a culture of impunity requires reforming national laws to recognize sexual violence as a crime, and ensuring that transitional justice processes exclude amnesty for acts of sexual violence amounting to war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide.

Both the United States and the European Union are involved in post-conflict restructuring and training of armed and security forces. Currently, mass rape is more likely to lead war-lords to the corridors of power, than to the cells of a prison. Commanders know that high-profile actions against civilians earn them attention as a force to be reckoned with. But if rape can be *commanded* or *condoned*, it can be *condemned*. It must carry consequences: recognition of those who prevent and punish sexual violence; prosecution for those who fail to do so.

**Second, ending the silence.** Leaders and individuals – including all of us here – are encouraged to take on a greater global advocacy role and collaborate with UN Action. One of the key goals of the UN Secretary-General’s campaign, “UNiTE to End Violence Against Women is that “the widespread and systematic use of sexual violence as a tactic of war is condemned and systematically addressed”. Resolution 1820 urges parties to armed conflict to “debunk the myths” surrounding sexual violence, including the myth that it is an inevitable byproduct of war.

One way is to mobilize new media, as EU Vice President Wallström has done through her blog, which highlights the anniversary of 1820. When she takes note, so do others. The upcoming 10th anniversary of resolution 1325 provides another occasion to call for stronger and more meaningful commitments to integrate gender into all aspects of peace and security work.

**Third, ensuring women’s full and equal participation in peace processes.** We must ensure that women benefit from peace processes as much as men do. Governments and international organizations involved in brokering peace must appoint women as high level envoys, mediators and facilitators. Mediators must ensure that parties to peace talks address sexual violence early and fully. How peacekeepers treat women can shape national and local perspectives--sending a message that women are essential to the consolidation of peace.

**Finally, funding services for survivors:** this includes judicial, health-care, physical, psychological and social services, and livelihood support. A holistic response to sexual violence is particularly important as it affects every aspect of a victim’s life. In addition, civilian protection mandates given to peacekeepers must be matched by adequate resources. More immediately, a forensic lab to handle soft-tissue evidence is vital to successful rape prosecution, yet not one exists in either DRC or Liberia, where rape is the most frequently reported crime.

We all have a role to play. The UN recognized that when agencies came together to create UN Action. To date, it has taken the following initial steps.

Most importantly, at **country-level**, it has provided strategic support in Darfur, DRC, Liberia and Kenya. In Liberia, which has made a high level commitment to address the issue of impunity, UN Action supports a Gender-based Violence Programme to strengthen government efforts and coordinated programming. In DRC, it supported development of a *Comprehensive Strategy to Combat Sexual Violence*, endorsed by the Government on 1<sup>st</sup> April. This holds great potential for addressing the devastating scale of sexual violence in DRC, and sets an important precedent for the UN system. In Sudan, it is supporting UNFPA to coordinate the response to sexual violence, which dominates the conflict in Darfur. And in the wake of contested elections in Kenya, it helped to develop a strategy to combat politically-motivated rape

In terms of **advocacy**, UNIFEM and DPKO, under UN Action auspices, brought together peacekeepers, commanders, policy-makers and Security Council members, to generate solutions to the increasing use of sexual violence in conflict. This provided the analytical background and impetus for the unanimous adoption of resolution 1820 last June. It also led to the field-testing of an inventory of promising protection practice by military and police peacekeepers. Through a range of advocacy material, including [stoprapenow.org](http://stoprapenow.org), UN Action shines a spotlight on the impact of rape as a tactic of war and is working to raise public awareness.

Finally, UN Action is building a **knowledge-hub** on sexual violence, which includes information on good practices and guidance for envoys, mediators and peacekeepers on implementing Resolutions 1325 and 1820.

These are promising first steps, but enormous challenges remain. Just recently, the UN peacekeeping mission in DRC –acknowledged that sexual violence is “dramatically on the increase”. All of us need to meet these challenges in our different capacities. Today’s discussion with two key policy-makers can help us to do this.

Thank you.

## European Commission Vice President Margot Wallström Talking Points: Recommendations on Sexual Violence & Resolutions 1820 and 1325

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### 1. Introduction:

- **A story**

Maybe some of you know the story of Lumo Sinai, just 21 years old. A year ago, she was rendered incontinent and possibly unable to bear children due to a violent gang rape in Eastern Congo. A year ago, she was dismissed by her fiancé, rejected by her family, and waiting for reconstructive surgery that would likely never come. I am glad to be here today, for Lumo.

- **Resolutions 1325/ 1820 anniversaries**

June of this year marked the **one-year anniversary** of UN Security Council Resolution 1820, and next year we look forward to the **10-year anniversary** of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security

These are our two most significant instruments in our fight against sexual violence against women in conflict

### 2. Actions:

- *We need to better implement the instruments we have—but, we need to go a step further. We should be more ambitious in how we make use of these instruments.*

These resolutions have set forth our message, but it is **time to go from words to deeds**. There are a few ways we can move forward:

- *We must make Resolution 1820 more specific.*

Building on the Secretary-General's recent report, we must publicly mount a campaign to improve Resolution 1820's specificity, potentially on the heels of the success of the resolution on Children in Armed Conflict. This can mean a:

- Security Council Working Group or Commission
- Specific list of **what countries are failing in implementation (name and shame)**
- Time-bound measures

- *We must remind justice systems that impunity and forgiveness can not erase these war crimes committed against women.*

When it comes to sexual violence, **forgiveness is not an option.**

But it continues: in Uganda, in order to file a rape allegation in court, a person must get a form from police to fill out and have signed by a medical officer. Many families are forced to bribe the police just to get the form, then bribe the medical officer to sign the form—after which, the police often ask for a fee from the *perpetrator* in order to make the form "disappear."

So we must **push with and against justice systems to ensure the themes of UNSCR Resolution 1820 are implemented**

The EU has been pushing this recommendation broadly, looking to **analyze gaps in laws and possible standardization of national legislation**

Specific recommendations for ending impunity and improving justice systems could include incorporating **more women into police forces** (such as the Indian policewomen in Liberia), establishing specific **sexual violence units in police forces**, or placing more **women on tribunals**

- *We must continue to raise awareness*

We must make this everyone's issue. Discussing the topic *is* disturbing, but we must.

Public Health Expert Tara Smith: "gang rape isn't exactly great fodder for cocktail parties. It's incredibly uncomfortable and depressing to speak about."

So you have to **figure out how you can talk about it.**

- Writing a blog entry for friends
- Sending a letter to an elected official
- Forwarding an article to a local newspaper
- Tweeting an alarming statistic for your followers

You just need to decide how you want to talk about this—**the sooner is it made your issue, the sooner it is made everyone's issue**

I know the **US has been actively recommending this need to raise awareness and shift public opinion on the seriousness of rape** as well

- *We must work to further build our technical capacity to tackle this issue*

We need to work from the ground up, and **ensure that the data and measures we are using are as accurate as possible**

We should utilize groups like the **Sexual Violence Research Initiative** and others to ensure we have a common set of data and indicators, so we have a concrete foundation for building our proposals

This is a particular **issue that the EU has been recommending**, agreeing to establish sub-groups to examine where data is lacking, while **piloting victimization surveys** within member states—a model we could apply globally

- *We must ensure that programs have the resources they need to be true partners.*

The **EU's DAPHNE program and the US have already committed enormous amounts** to the effort to end sexual violence in conflict

But it is important to mention the story of the Rwandan-Congolese troops that severely disabled an armed group in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. When the Rwandan troops left after their success, the armed group regained ground and security deteriorated again.

We cannot allow our previous contributions to set a tone of stagnation or status quo, or else security will once again deteriorate

We must continue to ensure that NGO and civil society programs have the **funding they need to transmit a cultural message that rape is not an acceptable norm**, and that there is help for survivors to come forward.

### 3. Conclusion

In light of the anniversaries of these Resolutions and the substantive recommendations we clearly still need, maybe **it is time for a UN mechanism to coordinate these needs.**

- We must eliminate the debate over whether rape is a strategy and once and for all, as my friend Tarja Halonen has advocated, classify rape as an illegal weapon of warfare – a weapon of mass destruction
- Swedish and Spanish EU presidencies of 2009-2010 will provide **a platform for enlarged EU and global commitment** to this issue
- Establishing a **World Commission for Ending Sexual Violence Against Women in Armed Conflict** to address key issues including ending impunity in justice systems, building effective implementation mechanisms, and working with victims.



The Council of Women World Leaders

invites you to

***Ending the Atrocity***  
***Stop Rape Now: UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict***

*Featuring:*

**The Honorable Margot Wallström**

Vice-President of the European Commission (2004-present)  
Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders' Ministerial Initiative

**Ambassador Melanne Verveer**

United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, US Department of State (2009-present)  
Co-Founder, Chair, and Co-CEO of Vital Voices Global Partnership (2000-2009)

*Facilitated by:*

**Ms. Inés Alberdi**

Executive Director, UNIFEM (June 2008 – present)

Moderated by Ms. Ines Alberdi, Executive Director of UNIFEM, this dialogue between the Honorable Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the European Commission and Chair of the Council's Ministerial Initiative, and Ambassador Melanne Verveer, United States Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, will examine the possible collaborative efforts between the US, the European Union, and ***Stop Rape Now: UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict campaign*** (UN Action). UN Action, composed of 12 UN agencies working to prevent all forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence in conflict, is a concerted effort to support national efforts to prevent sexual violence, improve coordination, amplify advocacy, and respond to the needs of survivors.

This event offers a unique opportunity to hear the perspectives of three of the world's most powerful and influential women leaders on a serious, present-day atrocity affecting millions of women, men, and children.

**Wednesday, July 8, 2009**  
**12:15pm – 2:00pm**

**The Aspen Institute**  
**One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 700**  
**Washington, D.C. 20036**

*This event is part of the Madeleine K. Albright Women's Voices at the Aspen Institute Series.*

Lunch will be served.

Seating is limited; please RSVP by Thursday, July 2, 2009, to Brita Stevenson:  
(Tel) 202.736.2522 or (Fax) 202.467.0790 or Email: [cwwlprograms@aspennst.org](mailto:cwwlprograms@aspennst.org)

*This invitation is not transferable; photo ID required.*



For more information about UN Action, visit:

[www.stoprapenow.org](http://www.stoprapenow.org)

