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Interactive Dialogue on Violence Against Women
March 20, 2007

Mr. President, my government would like to congratulate Mrs. Yakin Erturk on her comprehensive report on violence against women. This disturbing report rightly points out that violence against women and girls undermines any country's effort to build a stable, secure and productive society. Such violence is indefensible regardless of a country's regional affiliation or cultural traditions. For this reason, the United States has prioritized our efforts to address domestic violence, trafficking in women and sexual exploitation anywhere they occur.

The United States is deeply concerned that in recent conflicts, rape has been used as a weapon by governments during wartime to target women and children. In Darfur, the conflict has had a devastating impact on Sudanese women and girls due to sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by the *janjaweed* and Sudanese Government soldiers. In the early stages of the conflict, women and girls were brutalized as a tool of war as they were driven out of their homes. Now, as part of more than two million internally displaced persons, they remain vulnerable in the course of their daily lives.

The disturbing use of rape, violence, torture and forced labor of the women of Burma's Karen State are of equal concern to my government. These human rights abuses occur as part of a strategy designed to terrorize and subjugate the Karen people. We highlight the Special Rapporteur's observation that "the failure to investigate, prosecute and punish those responsible for rape and sexual violence has contributed to an environment conducive to the perpetuation of violence against women and girls in Myanmar." We call on the Burmese regime to step up to the responsibility of protecting its own people from these heart-wrenching crimes.

Finally, we have a question for the Special Rapporteur. The U.S. Government believes that prostitution and related activities are inherently harmful and dehumanizing, and contribute to the phenomenon of trafficking in persons. We fear that legalizing prostitution increases the number of trafficking victims. In your experience, to what degree does the legalization of prostitution lead to this form of violence against women and girls?

Thank you, Mr. President.