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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Brussels, 25 November 2009

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women 2009 - Mental Health Europe's position on gender based violence

The 25th of November is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Mental Health Europe (MHE) believes that violence against women is a key issue in addressing gender inequality and discrimination against women as well as in effectively addressing key development issues such as health and poverty.

Women are 70% of the world's poorest and it is estimated that one in three women worldwide will suffer some form of gender-based violence during the course of her lifetime. Being victim of violence is widely recognized as a cause of mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and panic attack.

Violence against women is multifaceted and linked to unequal gender norms and socio-economic power structures. It serves to reinforce and perpetuate gender inequity.

Women are disproportionately affected by poverty and discrimination; this affects their access to employment, educational opportunities and other resources to improve their lives, making them more susceptible to exploitation. For example, 80% of the world's trafficked people are girls under 18 years old. These girls/women are subjected to physical violence, sexual assault and rape, battery, imprisonment, threats and other forms of coercion.

MHE recognizes the steps already taken at different international levels towards the elimination of violence against women, but there is still much work to do to ensure the fight against gender based violence and discrimination are kept high on the political agenda.

MHE's action towards the elimination of violence against women is the transnational project "Violence against women in the workplace...Let's talk about it!"

MHE believes the importance of strengthening women's voices when being subjected to violence and harassment should remain a key priority!

For further information:

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Notes to Editors:

Mental Health Europe (MHE) is a European non-governmental organisation committed to the promotion of positive mental health, the prevention of mental distress, the improvement of care, advocacy for social inclusion and the protection of human rights for (ex-) users of mental health services, their families and carers. For more information: www.mhe-sme.org