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Press Release

## **UN Calls on Authorities to end Female Genital Mutilation**

**Nairobi (6<sup>th</sup> February 2008)**

As the world marks the International Day against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), we call upon all Somalis to challenge the deeply rooted socio-cultural practices that discriminate and create the environment for the continuation of human rights violations against women.

Female Genital Mutilation violates the basic rights of women and girls and seriously compromises their health, posing risks during childbirth, and leaving lasting physical and psychological scars. It robs women and girls of their rights to equal opportunities, health and freedom from violence, injury, abuse, torture and cruel or inhuman and degrading treatment, as well as the right to make decisions concerning reproduction. These rights are protected by international law.

The UN is calling on Somali authorities to intensify efforts to stop FGM in all its forms, and advance gender equality and human rights, including the right to sexual and reproductive health. The authorities should formulate and implement effective policies and laws that protect women. Additionally, communities need to be educated and engaged in the development of prevention programmes, which are culturally sensitive and take into account local realities.

The UN Secretary General's in-depth study on violence against women reported that, as of April 2006, fifteen African states where FGM is prevalent have made it an offence under criminal law. Somali authorities should also take the necessary steps to classify FGM as a criminal offence.

The commemoration of the International Day against Female Genital Mutilation began following the 2002 UN Special Session on Children where the signatory states to the Convention on the Rights of the Child committed to end FGM by 2010. An estimated 120 to 140 million women have been subjected to the practice and 3 million girls continue to be at risk each year.

For more information, please contact:

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