

Action on UN Standards and Norms on Victim Issues
Submitted by the
World Society of Victimology
To
UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
April 27, 2006

Honorable Chair and Member States, I am privileged to be President of the World Society of Victimology (WSV).

I call upon you to do an act of justice for victims by calling for an Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts to prepare actionable recommendations for your next meeting as to how the UN Standards and Norms on Victim Issues can be effectively implemented.

There are likely more than one and one half billion victims of crime, abuse of power and terrorism every year. That number is beyond most people's comprehension. Some quick mathematics will tell you that such a number translates into some 3,000 victimizations each minute of the day – so that by the time I finish my remarks at least 9,000 people will have been victimized. They will have been raped, assaulted, catastrophically injured or killed. And, those will be only the primary victims.

These numbers do not take into account the families and friends who will also suffer loss, pain and trauma as a result of the violation of a loved one. A psychiatrist in the United States once said that for every person killed there are three people whose relationship with that person will cause them to suffer for the rest of their lives. I ask you to consider whether only three people would grieve and suffer if you were to die? I suggest that for most people the extended circle of pain after such a death involves hundreds.

Yet there is little being done to provide victims themselves or their loved ones with dignity, compassion or justice in the aftermath of crime.

As proposed by the World Health Organization, the public and victims deserve policies that prevent victimization by tackling risk factors that cause it. But they deserve more.

- **They deserve recognition.**
- **They deserve protection.**
- **They deserve information and assistance in the criminal justice system – from the time the crime happens until the end of the case and even in the aftermath of case disposition.**
- **They deserve reparations for the totality of harm done by the offender.**
- **They deserve vindication.**
- **And, they deserve a commitment from society to search for the truth.**

Law enforcement must be first in aid with the help of victim support and crisis intervention. Prosecutors must provide opportunities for victim involvement. Public officials should create laws and policies that allow for victims to be heard. Judges should listen and respond with care. All who work with victims should be trained and educated in effective interventions.

This Commission is committed to the prevention of victimization and principles of justice for victims as one of its fundamental priorities. It has recommended guidelines on prevention and on child victims and witnesses. It has adopted a Handbook for practitioners and a Guide for Policy Makers on those principles of justice. It collaborates with WSV on a website that shares legislation and good practices.

Despite these laudable initiatives, victims remain in the shadows even in affluent countries. Yet victims are the central reason for your work and must be treated as such.

We call on you to establish ways to monitor the effectiveness of your decisions in reducing victimizations. We call on you to set aside ten percent of the resources of the Secretariat to implement the standards and norms on victim issues and to call on Member States to do the same.

We call upon each and every one of you individually to learn more about the victims in your country and region and develop a better understanding of their plight.

In August of 2006, the WSV will hold its 12th International Symposium on Victimology. We have experts from every region of the world coming to share the latest knowledge on how to support victims and provide real remedies. We will share the latest research and ways to education and train lawyers, judges and others. The meeting will occur in Orlando, Florida from August 20-25th. You may pick up further information on this historic event at the information table next to the document center. We will provide simultaneous interpretation between English and Spanish.

I am also pleased to announce the launching of a new organization established to deliver training and services on behalf victims. The International Organization for Victim Assistance will seek partnerships throughout the world to develop networks, provide technical assistance on best practices, methods and techniques that implement services, and promote policy formation on victim rights. Again, you can find more information on this organization near the document center.

We urge the Commission to join with us to take practical steps to assist member States in their efforts to meet the needs of victims.

These steps include:

- **Testing, promoting and multiplying best practices;**
- **Training and technical assistance for lawyers, law enforcement, prosecutors, judges and others who must assist victims;**
- **Implementing national legislation and institutions that will bring UN Standards and Norms into practice;**
- **Ensuring that the special needs are met of women, children and other vulnerable to chronic victimization;**
- **Fostering a global network of centers of expertise to support national initiatives.**

It has been twenty years since the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power. There have been a few lone voices that have tried to be heard

on behalf of victims and their loved ones calling for action on those principles. There have been a few sporadic gestures that have been taken to implement those principles. But, for the most part the shadows of darkness grow deeper as crime, abuse of power and terrorism expand their grip for generations among those who are victims.

Please heed the cries of those 3,000 people a minute who are victimized and take the next step in our response by calling for an Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts to prepare actionable recommendations for your next meeting on how to best implement the UN Standards and Norms on Victim Issues.

**Marlene A. Young
President
World Society of Victimology**

**marlene@iovahelp.org
www.worldsocietyofvictimology.org
www.victimology.nl**