

**Excerpts from a Speech by the Honourable Deepak Obhrai, M.P.  
& Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for  
International Human Rights  
On the occasion of the Book Launch:  
*Violence against Women - All Pervading*, edited by Ajit Jain  
Tuesday, April 1 – Parliament, Ottawa**

The elimination of all forms of violence against women is both a domestic and a foreign policy priority for Canada. Our government is working at the national level to make our communities—both offline and online—safer for women and girls.

Let me say a few words about Canada's efforts to advance the rights of women and girls at the international level. Canada is a global leader in efforts to protect women and girls from violence, exploitation and abuse. The actions of our government are guided by the implementation of Security Council resolutions on the role of women and the prevention of sexual violence and an Action Plan on women, peace and security.

Canada is deeply committed to ending the practice of child, early and forced marriage. Child marriage is simply unacceptable. It is an affront to human dignity that robs girls of their childhood, their health, their

education, their future. Reducing the numbers of such marriages would result in healthier, more prosperous, and safer societies.

Canada's leadership was seen at the UN General Assembly this past autumn where we worked closely with Zambia on a landmark stand-alone resolution on child, early and forced marriage. We achieved 109 co-sponsors, and the resolution passed by consensus. This leadership was also seen at the Human Rights Council where Canada was part of the cross-regional group of countries that introduced a resolution on this important issue.

And just a few days ago, Canada worked to ensure the inclusion of strong language on child, early and forced marriage in the key outcome document of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Canada has also fought hard to ensure that this important issues has been included in last year's G8 Foreign Minister's statement as well as in other multilateral forum, including the Commonwealth.

These diplomatic efforts are important because they raise the profile of this important issue internationally and get it on national agendas around the world.

In addition to our diplomatic efforts, equality between women and men is a crosscutting theme throughout Canada's international development policies, programs and projects. There is particular focus on the participation of women in decision-making; the promotion of the human rights of women and girls; and the reduction of inequalities in access to and control over the resources and benefits of development.

The exclusion of women not only represents a significant barrier to development, but can also hinder the achievement of sustainable peace and prosperity in their communities and countries. This is why Canada encouraged the Joint Special Representative for Syria, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, to ensure the meaningful participation of women in the Syrian peace talks and co-sponsored a multi-stakeholder roundtable on the role of Syrian women in resolving the crisis.

I can assure you that our government will continue to work hard to promote and protect the rights of women and girls in Canada and around the world.