



I T A L Y

Mr. President,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

11/14/07 11:00 AM

2007, it underlined its commitment to renewed national and international efforts in
the area of gender and the protection of women's rights. One of our main priorities

seriousness of this phenomenon and an alleged increase in cases of sexual violence

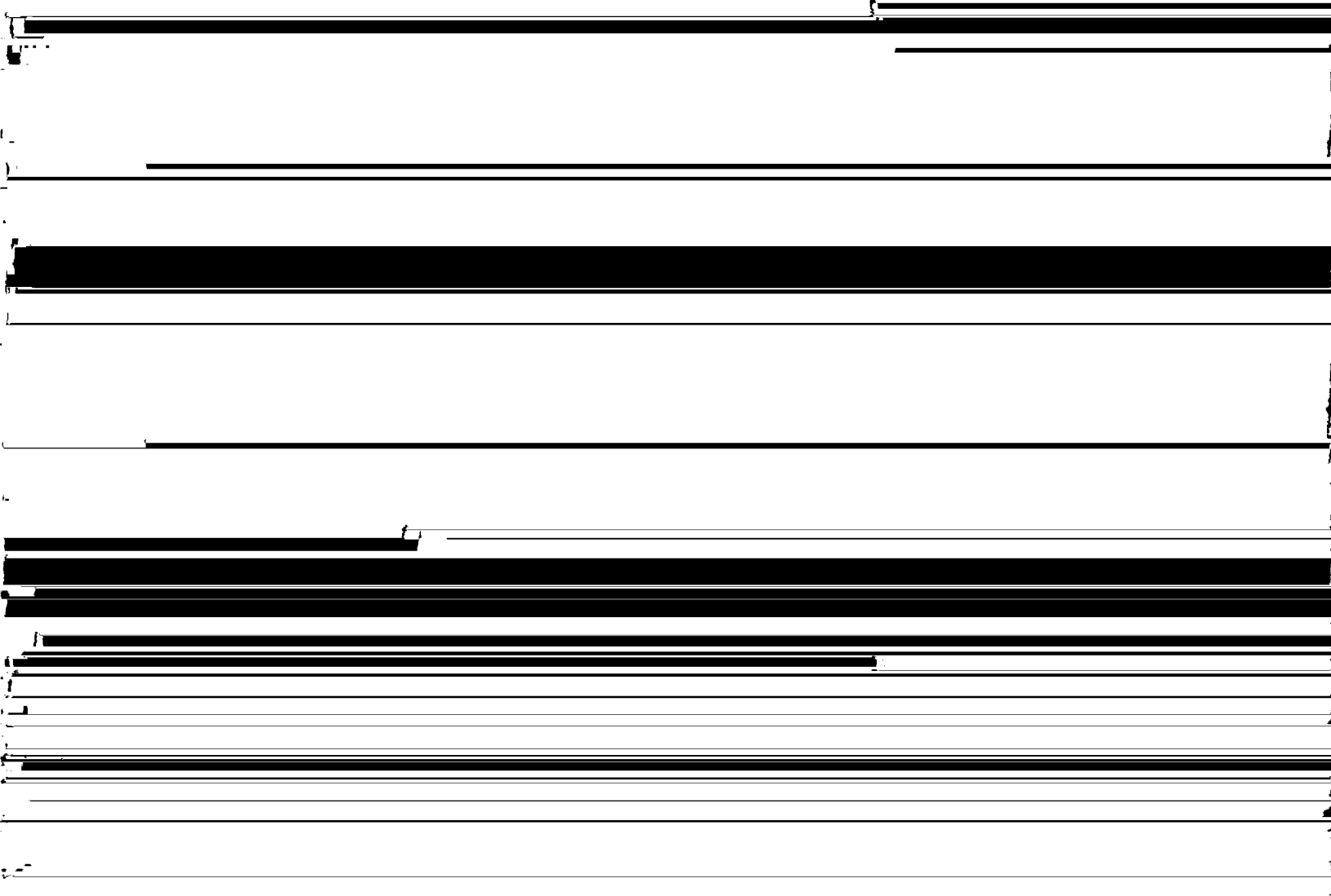
in our country.

stalking. The expert office of my Ministry is currently in the later phases of

the Head of the National Police Force – that will be an important component of the future National Plan against Violence. Lastly, I have proposed increasing the

are punished at the request of the Ministry of Justice. We are also re-establishing the commission for preventing and countering female genital mutilation, which I will chair and whose members will include the Under-Secretary of State for Labor, Health and Social Policies, Eugenia Roccella, and Hon. Emma Bonino – thus confirming the commitment of the entire political spectrum to this issue.

At the international level, I would like to add that since 2003, Italy has been the main contributor to the United Nations program against female genital mutilation. In late 2007 we were pleased to welcome UNFPA and UNICEF's launch of the Multi Donor Fund against female genital mutilation. It is



one of its main contributors last year and invites all donor countries to consider the possibility of contributing to this important Fund, which is still severely underfunded. Cooperation in this field must also be combined with political

prevention and action. Ignoring gender differences would in fact seriously limit the effectiveness of such programs and make any effort fruitless.

In closing, allow me to salute women, especially the young women in this hall. This session has issued a challenge to you: namely, to find the courage to worry about your future. Find the courage not to hide your femininity, thinking that it may be a distraction from your intelligence. Prove that you do not need to conform to masculine stereotypes to advance in your careers, and that you do not need to lose your identity. Most importantly, find the courage to face the challenge posed not by the opposite sex, but by the vital issues of today, our society, by age-old and harmful misconceptions. Women no longer wish to stand out simply because they are women. The time has come when we must stand out for the issues that we care about.

