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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Northampton MA: Zonta Club of Northampton Area invites all area citizens to an open forum on international human rights for women, and the issue of sexual slavery - "trafficking" - around the world. The program will take place at on Wednesday evening, March 31, at the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence, 220 Main St., Northampton (next to City Hall) from 7-9 p.m.

Zonta International, an organization whose mission is "to improve the status of women worldwide," announced in March 2003 a global campaign to challenge every nation to eliminate the trafficking of women and girls into sexual slavery. A Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) with the United Nations, Zonta has long been associated with many UN programs focusing on women's health and the education of girls.

The March 31 forum will focus Valley attention on the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, and its relationship to the anti-trafficking campaign. CEDAW has not been ratified by the United States.

"We members of Zonta Club of Northampton Area believe that our nation's leadership in human rights is called into question by our failure to ratify the CEDAW treaty," says Kate LaMay Miller, who is chairing the event. "All of the developed nations have signed on, with Afghanistan and Iran joining us as holdouts. We want to explore the reasons for the delay, and to bring about a citizen initiative to urge ratification."

Among the speakers will be Janice Raymond Ph.D., Co-Director of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW); Laura H. Roskos PhD, visiting scholar and Coordinator, MA CEDAW Initiative Center for Women's Health and Human Rights, and Connie Chow, Amnesty International USA, Women's Rights Program Steering Committee, who are both organizers of the Massachusetts CEDAW project; and Betty Jane Bourdon, Vice President of Zonta International. Mayor Mary Clare Higgins, who serves on the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, will present a welcome to the forum.

Organized in 1919 in Buffalo New York, Zonta International has a worldwide membership of 33,000 in 67 countries. Zonta Club of Northampton Area was chartered in 1934 and has a long history of service projects in the Valley. For more information, please contact Linda Gibbon at 413-268-9241, or check our website at [www.zontadistrict1.org/northampton\\_ma](http://www.zontadistrict1.org/northampton_ma)