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The Advocates presents keynote speech at Council of Europe seminar on the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Minneapolis / St. Paul, MN --- July 20, 2012 Cheryl Thomas, the director of The Advocates for Human Rights' women's human rights program, presented a keynote address at the Council of Europe's second regional seminar on the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). The seminar was held last week in Batumi, Georgia.

Thomas, an internationally recognized expert on legal reform to prevent domestic violence and hold perpetrators accountable, presented on current trends and developments in policy and legislation to prevent and combat violence against women. Her remarks focused on the practices in the countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Thomas was inspired by what she heard at the conference, saying, "I listened with pride and hope to the stories of progress that countries throughout the region are making in improving their response to violence against women. It is tangible progress and it is very exciting to know that The Advocates for Human Rights has played an important part in it." Thomas also wrote about her experience on *The Advocates Post*, The Advocates for Human Rights' new blog, at theadvocatespost.org.

The Istanbul Convention was adopted by members of the Council of Europe in April 2011. The regional seminars are held to encourage member states to ratify the convention, to raise awareness of its existence, and to discuss the benefits and challenges of ratifying the convention. Last week's seminar focused on the link between gender equality and combating violence against women.

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The Advocates for Human Rights, a nonprofit organization headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota, is committed to the impartial promotion and protection of internationally recognized human rights. With the help of hundreds of volunteers each year, The Advocates investigates and exposes human rights violations; provides representation to immigrants and refugees who have suffered human rights abuses; trains and assists groups that protect human rights; and uses research, education, and advocacy to engage the public, policy makers and children in human rights work. The Advocates has received international recognition for a broad range of innovative programs and holds Special Consultative Status with the United Nations. To learn more about The Advocates' work locally, nationally, and internationally, please see theadvocatesforhumanrights.org.