

**Remarks by June Kunugi, UNICEF Representative,
at the FBiH Awards Ceremony for the
“Unite for Children Unite Against AIDS” Drawing Competition
Sarajevo, 10 July 2008**

Dr. Zlatko Vucina, Director of the Public Health Institute of the Federation of Bosnia & Herzegovina,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of UNICEF, I would like to start by expressing congratulations to all students who participated in the competition, and deep thanks and appreciation to all partners—especially the Public Health Institute, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Education of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina—all of whom made this drawing competition a huge success. Special thanks go to Dr. Alma Skopo, the co-ordinator for this competition.

The results of this drawing competition highlight and celebrate the rich creative talent in the children of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Most importantly, it also had a very important social purpose. Through this successful collaboration we gained insight into the perceptions, attitudes, and levels of understanding of students on HIV/AIDS and their effects on young people and society.

Silence spreads the disease, and so by breaking the silence and stigma around the issue, and highlighting the rights and needs of children and families affected by HIV/AIDS, the competition promoted a positive and constructive approach towards people affected by the disease.

Although many images used negative, scary images such as monsters and drug syringes to show the dangers of the disease and its spread, what was very moving was to see images where children, through their own initiative and artistic expression, demonstrated compassion for people affected by HIV/AIDS, and showed the need to protect women and babies in particular. One of the winning drawings had a very nice slogan: “*Fight AIDS, not people with AIDS*”.

Although HIV/AIDS prevalence is still low in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Central and Eastern European region and the Commonwealth of Independent States have the highest rate of increase in HIV infection in the world—prevalence rates increased 150% over the past 6 years, and had in fact increased *twenty-fold* in less than a decade. The Bio-Behavioural Study that UNICEF conducted with funding from SIDA showed that in this country high-risk behaviours exist, including the early use of drugs and unprotected sex among young people.

That is why it is so important to achieve the four goals of the UNICEF-supported five-year campaign called **Unite for Children Unite Against AIDS**. The goals are to reduce the percentage of young people living with HIV/AIDS; to increase access to services preventing mother-to-child transmission; to ensure paediatric treatment for children in need; and to protect and support children affected by HIV/AIDS.

It is important that we are all guided by a vision of a society where children and families affected by HIV/AIDS are fully cared for, receive full treatment, and live long and productive lives. We should also aim to reverse the spread of the disease and eventually eliminate it completely. Many of the students’ drawings already have this vision, and we thank them for

showing us a possible and necessary future. On behalf of UNICEF I wish to again express our sincere thanks to all our partners, and we look forward to continuing our partnership so that our common goals for children, youth, women and families are achieved. **Unite for Children Unite Against AIDS.**